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Eastern Nights—and Flights

"The Face at the Window."

Eastern Nights —and Flights

A Record of Oriental Adventure

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BY

"CONTACT"

(ALAN BOTT)

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TO

MY MOTHER.

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Eastern Nights—and Flights.

A Record of Oriental Adventure.

CHAPTER I.

THROUGH THE LOOKING-GLASS.

Most of us who were at close grips with the Great War remember the habit of speculation about life on the far side of the front. Somewhere beyond the boundary-line, we realised, were our opposite numbers — infantrymen, gunners, aviators, staff officers, mess orderlies, generals, captains, lance-corporals—each according to character, rank, and duties, and to the position he occupied by reason of ability, courage, initiative, old age, self-advertisement, or wire-pulling. We saw them through a glass, darkly — a monstrous glass that, being partly concave, partly convex, and almost impenetrable throughout, showed us our opposite numbers as distorted reflections of ourselves.

We knew well that if we went through, round, or over this glass we should find ourselves in an unnatural world, where we should be negative

instead of positive, passive instead of active, useless scrap-iron instead of working parts of a well-constructed machine. Yet we never considered the possibility of being obliged, in that unreal word, to live such a life of impotence. Our companions, now, might have the bad luck to be dragged there; but our sense of normality would not let us reckon with such a somersault in our own case.

And then, perhaps, one fine day or night found us isolated in an attack, or shot down in an air fight; and we would be in the topsy-turvy country of captivity. Some of us, who passed into this country from the curious East, tumbled head-over-heels upon adventures fantastic as those of any explorer of the wonderland Through the Looking-Glass of fancy.

. . . . . .

We were a small band of six scout pilots, one monkey-mascot, and a team of Baby Nieuports, hangared in a large meadow that was the nearest aerodrome to the then front in Palestine. Slightly to the south was the one-time German colony of Sorona, with houses empty but for ugly furniture and ornaments, left behind when the routed Turco-Germans scurried up the coast-line after Allenby's great victory at Gaza. A few miles north was the trench-line, a few miles west were row upon row of sand-dunes, a sea of that intense blue which is the secret of the Syrian coast, and the ancient port of Jaffa, misnamed "The Beautiful."

The particular job of our detached flight of Nieuports was always to be ready, between dawn

and sunrise, to leap into the air at a moment's notice and climb towards whatever enemy aircraft were signalled as approaching from the north. Usually we flew in pairs, for the work was of the tip-and-run variety, and needed, above all things, speed in leaving the ground and speed in climbing; and a larger party would have been slower, because of the exigencies of formation flying.

"Four H.A. flying S. towards Mulebbis 10,000 feet" would be telephoned by an anti-aircraft battery. The bell (made out of a Le Rhone cylinder) would clang, the "standing by" pilots would fasten caps and goggles as they raced to their buses, the mechanics would swing the propellers into position as the pilots climbed into the cockpits, the engines would swell from a murmur to a roar, and, three minutes after the sentinel-operator had scribbled the warning, two Nieuports would be away across the sun-browned grass and up into the cool air. A climbing turn, at about 100 feet, and they would streak upward, at an angle of 45 degrees, to the air country above Mulebbis. And the next two pilots on the waiting list would come within easy reach of their flying kit.

Those were pleasant days, in pleasant surroundings. Our tents were pitched in an orange grove, which provided shade from the midday sun, privacy from the midnight pilfering of Bedouins, and loveliness at all times. The fruit had just ripened, and by stretching an arm outside the tent-flap, one could pick full-blooded giant Jaffa oranges.

In the heat of afternoon the four of us who were not waiting for the next call would mooch through the orange grove for a siesta; and in the cool of the evening we would drive to the sands for a moonlight bathe in the shimmering Mediterranean. For the rest, one could always visit Jaffa, where were some friendly nurses, and a Syrian barber who could cut hair quite decently. Apart from these attractions, and the mud hovel that may or may not have been the house of Simon the Tanner, Jaffa was just like any other town in the Palestine zone of occupation, with its haphazard medley of Arabs, Jews, and Syrians, all bent on getting-rich-quick by exploiting that highly exploitable person the British soldier.

On the evening before my capture I bathed in the company of a German cadet; a circumstance which I thought unusually novel, not foreseeing that my next bathe would also be in the company of a German, albeit under very different conditions.

One Offizierstellvertreter Willi Hampel had been shot down and captured, and was in the prisoners' compound at Ludd. It was decided that before forwarding Hampel to Egypt, the best way to milk him of information would be for another aviator to entertain him, while discussing aeronautics on a basis of common interest; and I was detailed for the duty. From his cage I motored Willi to lunch in our mess, showed him our machines and our monkey, and even took him to tea with an agreeable compatriot, in the person of a

beautiful German Jewess who was the landlord of some houses at Ramleh.

The information he let slip was not very illuminating—a few truthful statements about machines, pilots, and aerodromes, and a great many obvious lies. But his opinions on British aviation were interesting. Our pilots were splendid, but too reckless, he thought. As for the machines, the Bristol Fighter was the work of the devil, and to be avoided at all costs; the R. E. 8 might safely be attacked unless it were well protected, the British single-seaters were good, but the German Flying Corps regarded the B. E. types as "*sehr komisch.*"

As Willi was well-behaved and occasionally informative, and as he had been a flying contemporary of mine on the Western front in 1916 and 1917, I took him for a sea-bathe before he went back to his cage, while taking the precaution to swim closely behind him.

Next day the heat was intense, so that I was glad indeed when the arrival of a A.E.G. from the north gave me the chance to climb to the cool levels of 8000 to 10,000 feet, flying hatless and in shirt-sleeves. The trespassing two-seater spotted us, and retired before we could reach its height. But the next turn of my flying partner and me, in the late afternoon, brought us the good fortune of sending a Hun bus to earth—from sheer fright, not out of control—in open country. I was well content on landing, for the atmosphere was cooler, less oppressive, and almost pleasant, and my day's work should have been done.

But a pony, a monkey, and mischance conspired to send me beyond the lines for the third time that day, and the last time for many months. Instead of leaving the aerodrome at once, I remained to play with the monkey. Ten minutes later the bell clanged a warning. One of the waiting pilots raced to his machine, and was away; but the other, mounted on an energetic little pony, was chasing a polo ball. The pony, being pulled up suddenly, reared, and threw the rider. Seeing that he must be hurt, or at any rate shaken, I climbed to his bus and sent word that I would replace him, so that no time should be wasted. It was then about one hour before sunset.

The first Nieuport had a good start; but its pilot was new to the game, and failed to see the white puffs from directional shots fired by the nearest A.A. battery. The last I saw of his machine was as it climbed due east, with the apparent intention of sniffing at a harmless R. E. 8 to see if it were an enemy, and without noticing when I continually switch-backed my Nieuport fore and aft, as a signal that a real German was near. I therefore left what should have been my companion craft to its own amusement, and climbed towards the anti-aircraft bursts.

At about 9000 feet I reached their level, and picked up the intruder—a grey-planed two-seater of the latest Rumpler type. When I was still some 800 yards distant its pilot swerved round, and, holding down his machine's nose for extra speed, raced back northward, rather than be forced to fight. I streaked after it, beyond the trenches.

Now the Rumpler was faster than my Nieuport, but slower on the climb. My only chance of catching up, therefore, was first to gain height and then to lose it again in a slanting dive, with engine on, in the direction of the enemy, and to repeat these tactics. Although each dive brought me a little closer, this method was slow. I remember passing Kilkilieh and seeing Nablus (the Biblical Shechem), and still being outside machine-gun range of the black-crossed bus ahead.

It was at a spot west of Nablus, and about twenty miles from the lines, that I got my chance. By then we had nosed down to 6000 feet. Being able to manœuvre twice as quickly as the big two-seater, the little Nieuport was soon in a "blind spot" position. I attacked from a sideways direction, opening fire at 80 yards. The Rumpler dived almost vertically out of the way, and I overshot.

I was turning again, when from above came a succession of raps—*tatatatata, tatatat, tatatatatat,*—the unmistakable tap-tapping of aerial machine-gun fire. I looked up and saw three scouts dropping towards me from a cloud-bank.

Swerving around on an Immelman turn I managed to get underneath the nearest scout as it flattened out. I had just pulled down my top-plane gun, and was preparing to fire a long burst upward into the belly of the scout, when—*poop!*—my petrol tank opened with a dull thud. The observer in the Rumpler had opened fire at a distance of more than 300 yards (far outside what is the normally effective range for

aerial fighting), and, by an extraordinary touch of ill-luck for me, some of his bullets had ripped through my tank,—the only circumstance which, at that moment, could have put my Nieuport out of action. The petrol gushed over my trousers and swilled round the floor of the cockpit.

I turned south and had begun a last-hope effort to reach the trenches before all the fuel had disappeared, when I received a second shock. On looking over the side, I was horrified at seeing that underneath the tank the fuselage was black and smouldering. Next instant some wicked-looking sparks merged into a little flame that licked across the centre of the fuselage. A thrill of fear that was so intense as to be almost physical went through me as I switched off, banked the bus over to the left as far as the joy-stick would allow, and, holding up its nose with opposite rudder, went down in a vertical side-slip—the only possible chance of getting to earth before the machine really caught fire. The traditional "whole of my past life" certainly did not flash before me; but I was conscious of an intense bitterness against fate for allowing this to happen one week before I was to have returned to Cairo the Neutral, where they dined and cocktailed, and where the local staff officers filled the dances arranged for the poor dear lonely young officers on leave from the front. And I shouted blasphemies into the unhearing air.

I have no hesitation in saying that I was exquisitely afraid as the Nieuport slid downwards at a great speed, for of all deaths, that of roasting in an aeroplane while waiting for it to break up

has always seemed to me the least attractive. But the gods were kind, for by the time I reached a height of 500 feet the violent rush of air—which incidentally boxed my ear painfully—had overwhelmed the flame and swept it out of existence. The fuselage still smouldered, however, and after righting the bus (now completely emptied of petrol) I lost no time in looking for a landing-place.

This was a hopeless task. Below was rocky mountain-side, contoured unevenly, with no level nor open spaces and scarcely any vegetation. There was just one patch of grass, about fifteen yards long; and although this was much too small for a landing-ground, I chose it in preference to bouldered slopes or stony gorges.

After pancaking down to the fringe of the brown grass the Nieuport ran uphill for the length of the patch and was heading for a tree trunk, when I ruddered strongly to avoid a collision, swerved aside—and banged into the face of a great rock. Of what came next all I remember is a jarring shock, an uncontrolled dive forward against which instinct protested in vain, an awful sick feeling that lasted a couple of seconds, and the beginnings of what would have been a colossal headache if unconsciousness had not brought relief.

. . . . . .

Consciousness returned dimly and gradually. First of all, I saw the rock on which my head was lolling; but I had no sense of unity, nor could I feel any bodily sensations except an oppressive want of breath. I twisted my neck

and looked up at the sky, and somehow realised that the sun must have set. Then I noticed, quite impersonally, that a band of ragged Arabs were climbing towards me. Most of them carried rifles, and all had pistols or daggers protruding from their sashes and ammunition belts. The foremost had unsheathed a long knife, which he fingered appraisingly as he advanced at a quick walk.

CHAPTER II.

PAIN, PURGATORY, AND A PLAN.

As my senses became clearer the feeling of oppression in my chest grew more and more acute, and I had to struggle desperately for breath. Very vaguely I comprehended that I was on the wrong side of the war's looking-glass.

I did not realise that I was directly concerned in the Arabs' intentions and actions, but looked at the motley group from the detached point of view of a cinematograph spectator. They were an unkempt group, with ragged robes and dirty head-dresses and straggling beards and unfriendly eyes,—the sort of nomads who, during the lawless days of war, would—and did—cheerfully kill travellers for the sake of a pair of boots, a dress, or a rifle. They had between them a strange variety of arms—guns of every size and shape, belts of close-packed ammunition, revolvers and bone-handled pistols, and curved knives.

And the foremost Arab continued to advance, while fingering the drawn blade of his knife. He was only a few yards distant when another and older man stopped him with a shout. The

man with the blade answered heatedly. A general argument followed, in which most of his companions took part. At that time my knowledge of Arabic was of the slightest, and in any case I was not in a condition to grasp the meaning of their words. Yet instinct and deductions from their pantomime made me certain that they were debating some rather debatable points, namely—whether somebody should be killed and stripped, or merely stripped, or whether it would be more worth while to hand him over alive to the Turks in return for *baksheesh*.

And again I did not regard myself as interested in the deliberations, nor was I the least bit afraid, being still under the spell of spectatorial detachment. When the Arabs' argument was settled beyond question by the sudden appearance on a near-by slope of a detachment of Turkish soldiers, I regarded the scene much as if it had portrayed a film sheriff, with comic sheepskin-booted posse, riding to rescue the kidnapped maiden from the brigands.

The dozen Arabs stood sullenly aside as four mounted officers arrived, followed by some running soldiers.

"*Anglais?*" said a young officer as he dismounted.

And the mental effort of asking myself if I were English brought back most of my senses and understanding, and I discovered that I was intensely uncomfortable. The struggle for breath was almost insupportable, a searing pain permeated my right thigh, and my head felt

as if it were disintegrating. I tried to move, but an implacable weight held firmly everything but my head, one arm, and one leg.

"*Anglais?*" repeated the young officer. I tried to speak but failed, and could only nod, miserably.

The soldiers got to work behind me, and first the weight on my chest and then that on my thigh lifted. Two officers helped me to rise. One of them felt my face.

"Not so bad. I am a doctor. I will bandage it," he said in French.

I searched to find what was not so bad, and discovered that all this while I had been seeing through the right eye only, for the left was screwed up tightly, with a swollen forehead overhanging it. The doctor let go my arm to fetch some dressing from his horse. I promptly collapsed, because one thigh would not perform its work. I fell among pieces of the most completely wrecked aeroplane I have ever seen.

After hitting the rock the machine had evidently crashed to starboard, so that I was thrown sideways over the top plane. The starboard wings were matchwood, the struts on the port side had snapped, and the fuselage was twisted into a wide curve, a corner of the rock having cut through one longeron and bent another. None of the main parts — planes, fuselage, centre-section, rudder, or elevator— was whole, and all were intermingled with bits of wire, splinters of wood, and tattered fabric. As for the engine, it had fallen clean out, and

was partly buried in earth. It was the engine that had been weighing so painfully on my right thigh, while the forward end of the fuselage pinned down my chest. I thought of burning these remains by throwing a lighted match among them suddenly, but did not do so—firstly because I had no match, and secondly, because there was nothing worth the burning. The soldiers had already taken the instruments from the dashboard, and one of them, I noticed, had broken off the joystick to take as a souvenir.

The doctor having bound up my face and helped me to mount a mule, we left the Arabs to their scowls of disappointment at being cheated out of loot. All this while I had been exceptionally well treated by the officers and men in Turkish uniform. Not one had spoken roughly, nothing was taken from me, even my pockets were not searched. Could it be that the Turks treated their prisoners well instead of badly? Even on the British side of the lines we heard stories of how Turkish soldiers had killed British wounded, how Turkish officers had threatened newly-taken prisoners with death if they did not give up all they possessed, and how men's money and most boots were stolen immediately they were captured; although we did not hear anything like the damnable truth of the Turks' atrocities. The mystery soon explained itself.

"*Est-ce-que les Anglais viendront bientôt?*" said the young officer who had first spoken.

"*Qui sait?*"

"*Moi, je l'espère bien, parce que je suis Ar-*

ménien. Nous sommes tous des Arméniens ou des Arabes."

I had been lucky enough to fall among, not Turks, but Arabs and Armenians. Their officers were, one and all, pro-British. They were a labour unit, explained the young Armenian, and their work was to make roads and tracks across the hill-country. Like all the conscript Armenians and Greeks, and most of the Arabs, they had not been sent to the actual front, because most of them would have deserted to the British at the first opportunity. The doctor who had dressed my face was a Jew. The commandant, whom I would meet at the camp, was an Arab, and had a great respect for the British. But he would not dare pretend to show me too much friendliness, because some of the men acted as spies for the Turks.

The camp sprawled in a hollow between two hills, without any semblance of order. The men were squatting at their evening meal, in little parties, each man dipping his fingers into the large bowl that was in the centre of his group. The Arab commandant, a fat man with a good-humoured face, was in front of his tent. He looked at me with grave curiosity on learning that I was English, and, through an interpreter, greeted me ceremoniously. He was sorry indeed, he said, for my misfortune, and he hoped my hurts were not serious. He had little enough hospitality to offer, but it would be a privilege to make me as comfortable as possible. Would I honour the officers by joining them at dinner?

Over a meal of soup, bread, rice, and raisins, I was questioned guardedly about my views on the duration of the war, the conditions of life in that part of Palestine occupied by the British, and, above all, if the British would advance soon. I explained that the Arabs, Syrians, and Jews were contented and on good terms with our troops; that food was plentiful; that local inhabitants were well paid for everything they sold to the British armies; that the population was overjoyed at being freed from the Turks.

Several eyes gleamed, and most of the company looked thoughtful; but no comments were passed. Those present looked at each other with side-glances, as if distrustful and afraid to speak.

But afterwards, when we went outside the tent to drink our coffee by moonlight, the commandant took me aside and unburdened himself, while pretending to watch the doctor rebandage my face. Was it true, he asked that the British intended to give Arabia and part of Syria to the Arabs?

"Most certainly," I replied.

Was it true that the British were friendly to the Arabs, and gave their Arab prisoners all sorts of privileges not given to the Turkish prisoners?

"Most certainly."

The good-humoured face of the Arab hardened as he began talking of the Turks' misdeeds. They had massacred many of the Syrian notables. They had starved to death half the Lebanon population. They had commandeered all the

crops. They had thrown many hundreds into prison and left them there without trial. The whole of the population hated the Turks, and were only waiting for a British victory to rise up and kill the grasping officials. When the British advanced they would receive such a welcome as conquerors had never before received in Syria.

With that he began to tell me how, after he had been taken for service from his native town of Homs, the Turks had sent his family to Aleppo, and told him that if he deserted their lives would be forfeit. By merely talking to me he would be suspect. Would I be kind enough to give him my word of honour not to try to escape while in his charge? If, however, I were sent to Damascus and thought of escaping from there, I might obtain help from an Arab whose address he would give me. As I could not walk five yards, and still felt deadly sick, I promised readily enough.

The young Armenian helped me across to his tent and put me to bed. He then wrapped himself in a blanket and lay on the floor facing the entrance; for, he said, if I were left to sleep alone the men would creep in to steal my clothes and boots.

At about two o'clock in the morning, after a few hours of fitful sleep, I was woken up and asked to dress. A German staff officer, said the Armenian, had ridden over to see that I was sent away, fearing that the Arabs might help me to escape. Outside, in the moonlight, I found an eye-glassed lieutenant—correct, aloof, and im-

maculate. In atrocious French he asked if I were badly shaken, and if I thought I could ride for three hours. I did not think I could ride for three hours. He was sorry, but I really must ride for three hours. Why, then, had he troubled to ask my opinion if I could ride for three hours? He made no reply, but I heard him giving instructions to the Sanitätsunteroffizier who had come with him to have me put on a mule and, with drawn revolver, to ride behind, while a guide led the way to Army Group Headquarters.

A shambling decrepit mule was commandeered from the Arab, and with many a groan I was helped on to its back. The Sanitätsunteroffizier mounted his pony, drew his revolver, and cocked it with an ostentatious click. An Arab guide took hold of my mule's reins. I said good-bye to the Arab and Armenian officers, and we moved off down a straggling track. The commandant had no chance to give me the address of his friend in Damascus.

About fifty yards ahead I saw what looked like a Bedouin gallop across a stretch of grass and disappear behind a mound. And then, from the camp behind us, came a startled and furious call: "*Mein Pferd! Teufel! Wo ist mein Pferd?* The Sanitätsunteroffizier motioned our guide to turn round, and we retraced our path. The young staff officer—no longer correct, aloof, and immaculate, and with eyeglass dangling unheeded in front of his tunic—was in a rage. He had told "one of these brutes," said he to the Sanitätsunter-

offizier, to hold his horse, and he now found both the horse and the brute had disappeared. I remembered the Bedouin whom I had seen riding across the patch of grass, and was infinitely amused. It appeared that the man who held the horse had already deserted twice and been recaptured; for his third attempt, who could blame him for taking as companion a German officer's horse, since Allah had sent such a wonderful gift? And the young German raged and cursed and shouted verbal contempt for all these Asiatic "cattle," among whom it was his misfortune to live. After promising the commandant all sorts of penalties, he said he would take the best horse from the Arab officers' stable.

The Sanitätsunteroffizier and I again walked our mules along the narrow track. It was a ride that will live always vividly in my memory. The guide dragged my mule up impossible slopes, pulled it over slippery rocks that ended in an almost vertical drop of several feet, and beat it unmercifully on the several occasions when it fell forward on to its knees. Each small jolt sent an exquisite pain through my contused thigh. My head felt as if it were being beaten by hammers. Everything seemed unreal. The piles of heaped-up stones, so common in this country of nomad Arabs, looked like monstrous gargoyles in the half-light of the moon.

After about an hour I became light-headed again, forgot I was a prisoner, forgot I was on mule-back, and almost forgot that I existed. I lost consciousness of everything but the light

of the moon, which appeared as a great white hanging sheet, from the other side of which sounded, far away and unnatural, the voice of the Unteroffizier, like the trickling of hidden water. Finally I fainted, and must have fallen from the mule, for when I recovered consciousness my head and arms were sore, and the German was arranging my bandages. Refreshed by a short drink of water, I was once more pushed on to the mule's back, and continued the purgatorial journey over the rocky hillside. It was four hours after we had started when the Unteroffizier announced that a village in a small valley some quarter of a mile ahead was Arsun, the site of Group Headquarters.

I was taken to the officers' mess, where the eye-glassed young officer was relating to two early risers—a colonel and a major—how the dirty pig-dog of an Arab had stolen his best horse. The senior officer present, a staff colonel, received me kindly enough; but the major looked at my torn clothes and swollen face and laughed. The colonel gave me wine, and offered his sympathy. He fought, he said, side by side with the British in the Boxer War, and he had the greatest regard for the English infantryman. Finding that I had flown in the battle of the Somme, he launched into reminiscences of that epic struggle, and told me how desperately hard put were the Germans not to let their retreat degenerate into a rout. Now, however (this was the period of the whirlwind German advance towards Amiens), things were better. He believed that Hindenburg, having

bled the French white, would bring about a German peace by the coming autumn. I remarked that the French were by no means bled white, and, moreover, that there were plenty of Englishmen and Americans in the world. Here the major interposed with a sneer—

"Americans! All through the war the Allies have clutched at straws and men of straw. First it was the Russians, then the blockade, then the British, and now that all these three have failed it is the Americans! I know the Americans well. They are all talk, bluff, and self-interest. They will make not the least difference to German invincibility."

He proceeded to draw offensive comparisons between the Germans and the English. The German nation was magnificently organised, whereas the British leaders could scarcely be more stupid. But it was not only a question of organisation. From every point of view the German was superior to the Englishman. He was braver, more intelligent, more obedient, and had a higher sense of honour. When it was a question of equal conditions the German invariably beat the Englishman. He turned to the colonel, and, speaking in German, pointed out as a proof of his contentions that I myself had been shot down by a German. Also speaking in German (for the first time since my capture), I mentioned that I had been fighting with not one but four German machines, that the German aviators on the Palestine front invariably ran from the British unless in greatly superior force, that the proportion of machines shot down in

Palestine was about five Germans to one British, and, moreover, that when a German officer had the misfortune to be captured he was treated as a gentleman, and was not made a target for uncivil taunts.

The major rang the bell, and ordered me to be taken to a tent by the cook-house.

Once more I lay down. This time I was allowed to sleep until awakened by the myriads of flies that swarmed round the cook-house while lunch was being prepared. I hung about the tent, miserably and dejectedly, for two hours. Then a lieutenant arrived, and announced that the major would be graciously pleased to accept an apology for my lack of respect. If, I replied, the major would express his regrets for having spoken offensively of the English, I would be delighted to exchange apologies with him. The lieutenant and I treated each other to punctilious salutes, and he withdrew; and that was the last I heard of the ill-mannered major.

To give the devil his due, he provided the single example of German rudeness that I met with while in captivity. It is obvious, from the stories of prisoners repatriated from Germany, that the Boche at home was often a brute and a vulgarian in his treatment of captives. But in the East his contempt for the Turks and Arabs seemed to make him regret seeing a fellow-European in their hands. At any rate, German officers and men often arranged that British prisoners whom they met on the Turkish railways should be provided

with a higher degree of comfort; and during the damnable 800-mile march of the Kut-el-Amara garrison across the desert and mountains, on starvation rations, when thousands died from the cruelty and neglect of the Turks, German and Austrian motor-lorries picked up and saved hundreds of worn-out, half-clothed Tommies who had been left to die by the roadside.

In the afternoon, after receiving some bread and coffee, I was sent away on pony-back, with a German cavalryman as escort. This trooper was friendly and garrulous. He pronounced himself a Social Democrat and an Internationalist. He was a good German, he claimed, and had fought for Germany since 1914; but he had neither hatred nor contempt for Germany's enemies. It was the Ministers, the politicians, the professors, the journalists, and the general staffs who had manufactured hatred. The German civilians and non-combatant troops were blinded by racial feeling, but, according to my Social Democrat guard, not so the fighting man. He liked and respected many of his officers, especially the colonel whom I had met; but after the war the proletariat would see that they, and the class they represented, discarded their arrogance and ascendancy. And this half-baked idealist looked forward with confidence to a wonderful peace that would send him back to his trade of printing, and would bring about an immediate heart-to-heart reconciliation of Germany and the rest of the world.

With such debating-society talk my mind was distracted from the dull ache in my thigh and

the spasmodic pains that came with every jolt from the pony. The heat was intense on my uncovered head, and the flies collected in their hundreds each time we halted to allow a party of ragged Arabs, mounted on camels or donkeys to pass round some bend of the track ahead of us.

The country was fairly level, however, and it was not long before we reached my next stage —a German field hospital, corresponding approximately to the British casualty clearing station. There my face and thigh were dressed, and for the first time since capture I could indulge in the glorious luxury of a wash.

My destination, it appeared, was the Austrian hospital at Tul-Keran, whither I was forwarded by motor-ambulance, with several wounded Turks. It proved to be a dirty insanitary building, such as we should scarcely have used as a billet; but it provided a much-needed place of rest.

Most ex-prisoners of war will agree that the time when one is first left alone for any length of time, after capture, is a first-class substitute for purgatory. All at once the realisation that one is cut off and under most galling restraint becomes vivid and intense. The thought of irrevocable separation from one's fighting companions, and of what they must now be doing, leaves one utterly miserable and dejected. So it was with me. Fifteen miles to the south our Nieuports would be waiting for the next tip-and-run call to flight. It would, perhaps, be the turn of Daddy and the Babe, who would

hang around the hangars, while the rest trooped across to tea in the orange grove. Soon all of them would be driving along the wired-over sandy road to the coast.

And here was I, herded with unclean Turks in a crowded unclean room, while the hot sun streamed through the window and made one glad to get protection from it by hiding under an unclean blanket.

Only fifteen miles to the south. And the coast was fifteen miles to the west. The coast? Why, a friend of mine, after he was forced to land in the sea, had effected a marvellous escape by hiding among the sand-dunes during the daytime, and during the night alternately swimming, walking, and rolling through the shallow water on the fringe of the sands, until he had passed the Turkish trench-line. Only fifteen miles; and from aerial observation I knew that the country between Tul-Keran and the sea was more or less flat.

I resolved that when my leg allowed me to walk, I would somehow escape from the hospital early one night, try to reach the shore before dawn, hide during the following day, and then run or swim to the lines.

CHAPTER III.

THE FLIGHT THAT FAILED.

TUL-KERAN hospital was altogether beastly. After my head had been shaved until it looked like a door-knob, I was taken to a sheetless, dirty-blanketed bed, in an overcrowded ward that reeked of unwashed flesh. The beds were so close that one had to climb into them from the foot, so that there was no chance of escaping the smell. On my right was a Syrian doctor with a smashed leg; and on my left, not two feet away, was a young Turkish officer with aggravated syphilis, who groaned and complained all day long. When he was not in pain he read pamphlets in Turkish (copies of which had been distributed to all the patients), explaining just how England had shamefully attacked the peace-loving Turks and Germans without warning.

The two windows were both broken, and through them the scorching sun poured all day long. Tul-Keran, being in low-lying country, is infested throughout the hot summer of Samaria by legions of flies. In our hospital they settled in their swarms on beds, faces, food, hands and arms, and flew at random from one diseased

patient to another. At night they gave place to hordes of mosquitoes that pounced upon and bit every particle of a man's body left exposed. The sole relief, by day or by night, was to hide one's head under the filthy blankets; and then the closeness and the reek made one gasp for breath.

But worst of all was an intense agony of mind. I lay in bed and thought of my squadron going through its daily rounds a few miles south-west of me; of my last air-fight, and whether I might not have avoided capture by the use of different tactics; of what the sinister word "missing" would convey to various people in England and France; of whether I was destined to spend months or years in captivity; and of the general beastliness of everything. Above all, I railed, uselessly and illogically, against Fate.

The Austrian staff of the hospital offered whatever kindnesses they could, and treated me rather better than they treated the Turks. Each morning the doctor brought me the Vienna '*Reichspost*' to read, and after a passing glance at my distorted features (I was known as "the Englishman with the face"), stayed to chat for several minutes. He was charming and decorative, with his light-blue uniform, his curled moustache, and his medals; but I never saw him pay any medical attention to patients, beyond ordering medicine or saying that each man was progressing wonderfully well.

A good-hearted but race-proud Austrian priest often stopped by my bedside for a friendly argument about the war. For its outbreak he blamed

Russia in the first place, but seemed to regard Germany as the second culprit; although he delivered himself of the usual propaganda-manufactured story of a Machiavellian Sir Edward Grey, whose agents worked nefariously in dark corners against the legitimate development of the Central Powers. I gathered, from many hints, that he shared with most Austrian officers a deep-rooted dislike of the Germans. For Frenchmen and Englishmen, as distinct from France and England, he professed sympathy and respect. He performed many services for me, such as changing some Egyptian notes at almost their full value, instead of at the ruinous rate of exchange offered by Turkish banks and traders. He was, however, a rabid hater in one connection—he could find no words bad enough for the Czechs and other subject-races of Austria-Hungary. To him it seemed a crime that they should be discontented with the suppression of their racial sentiments and institutions, and should agitate for self-expression.

"They must either be loyal to us or cease to exist," he said.

Once I mentioned inadvertently that I had met Másaryk in London and admired him—and that was the end of my friendly relations with this otherwise kindly padre, who afterwards was polite but distant.

One morning there came a German officer, very tall, very correct, and wearing the badge of an observer in the German Flying Corps. He clicked his heels, bowed from the waist upwards, and inquired: "Hauptmann Bott?"

I admitted to the name and rank, whereupon the visitor introduced himself as Oberleutnant Wolff, the man whose shots had punctured my petrol tank and brought my machine down in the mountains. Having apologised for the state of my face, he offered to drop over some British aerodrome a letter announcing that I was alive and would like some clothes. In accordance with the polite relations between British and German aviators in Palestine, I was visited by several other Flying Officers, each of whom—out of pure kindness of heart as I thought—made the same suggestion. When, however, I had written the letter, and addressed it to "British Air Force, Palestine," I was told that no communication could be sent unless I addressed it by name to my late Squadron Commander, giving the number of the squadron and the situation of the aerodrome—all of which would have been highly useful information. I refused to write such an address, and said I would do without my kit. The stipulation must have been bluff, however, for Oberleutnant Wolff took the original letter and dropped it over the British aerodrome at Ramleh, which was well known to him.

Every few days British aeroplanes flew low over Tul-Keran, and bombed either the railway station or the local encampments. When this happened, Turks and Arabs would scurry from the road while the anti-aircraft guns were firing, and all our orderlies would disappear until the bombardment had ended. Soon after Oberleutnant Wolff's last visit an aeroplane, instead of

making for the railway, hovered above a large meadow used as a landing-ground, and let fall what must have looked like an enormous bomb. It whirled down slowly, by reason of the long streamers attached to the head of it. It did not explode, and the aeroplane left without troubling Tul-Keran any further. The "bomb" was a sack containing kit for myself and Major Evans (captured three weeks earlier), which a British pilot had risked his neck to bring.

A German Unteroffizier brought the sack to the hospital, and opened it before me. He searched nearly everything — boots, underclothes, and trousers—and actually ripped open the lining of a tunic in a hunt for hidden papers. But what he did not find—and I did—was a tiny slip of tissue, sewn into the corner of a collar, with this message scribbled on it: "Dear Bottle—So glad you're alive. Never say die! Dine with me at the Savoy when we meet after the war.—'X.'"

Six months later—before the end of the war—when I had escaped from Turkey, I did dine with "X"; but at Floca's, in Salonika, and not the Savoy.

The kit was very welcome, for I had been flying in my shirt-sleeves when shot down; but still more welcome was the knowledge that people at home would know that I lived. With this worry removed I now had a clearer mind for preparing an escape. Moreover, my leg was feeling stronger every day, so that I hoped to make the attempt quite soon.

While thinking over my plan one morning, I was interrupted by a soft-spoken sentence in

French from the Syrian doctor with the smashed leg—

"M. le Capitaine, both of us would like to be in some place away from these Turks."

At the time I did not know to what a state of despair the Syrians had been brought by misery and oppression; and in any case it seemed unwise to let a stranger know that I hoped to escape.

"Naturally," I replied, "I should like to be out of the hands of the Turks, although I suppose they will keep me till the end of the war. For me it is damnable here. But you?"

"For you it is a thousand times better than for me," he said with intensity, though still speaking in a low voice. "For two years I have been living among people who are half-savage and wholly ignorant. Because I am a Christian, their officers try to treat me like a dog. All the time I was with an infantry regiment I never knew when one of those Turkish beasts would shoot me. Nothing would be done to a soldier who did shoot me. I am certain I have remained untouched only because doctors are scarce. Several other doctors—Syrians and Jews—ran away and managed to reach the British lines at night-time; but I had no chance."

He continued to tell of the disgusting conditions which he had to share with Turkish soldiers, who lived more like animals than human beings. His own intention, if the Turks allowed him to go to his home at Damascus until the broken leg healed, was to slip out of the city and, keeping east of the Turkish lines in the Jordan Valley with one of the caravans that the Armenians

and Arabs had organised, trek down to Akaba, where were the Hedjaz Arabs allied to the British. He suggested that if I were sent to the same hospital in Damascus we might make the attempt together.

So we talked on, in the heat of the afternoon, keeping silent for long intervals so as not to excite suspicion. All this while the diseased Turk on my left, who could speak nothing but Turkish and Arabic, was moaning and tossing.

That evening, after thinking matters over, I decided that my slight chances of getting back to the British lines by swimming down the coast could scarcely be lessened, and might be improved, if I asked the Syrian for advice. He was very sympathetic and quite unsurprised, but he did not think the chances of success were great, because of the thousands of soldiers in the district through which I should have to pass. Nevertheless, if my leg became stronger I might possibly scrape through, he said. As for him, he would like enormously to come with me, but was helpless.

My leg did get better very rapidly, and I began to make final preparations. Each day the Syrian and I saved pieces of bread, so that I might have a store to take with me. The supply of water would be a more difficult question, as I had nothing in which to carry it. This problem was solved by a Turkish general.

One morning the orderlies tidied the room feverishly until it looked almost clean, while announcing that "The Pasha" was coming. General Djouad Pasha, Commander of the 8th

Turkish Army, arrived soon afterwards, attended by a mixed collection of Turkish, German, and Austrian officers—each of which national groups kept itself separate and tried to look as if it had no connection with the others. He talked amiably to the Turkish patients, amid a chorus of "Yes, Excellency," and "No, Excellency," and more than amiably to me. Was I getting better, and would I like some wine sent to me? The answer in each case was a truthful "yes." To the doctor with the smashed leg he was abrupt and aloof when he discovered him to be a Syrian, and curtly refused the Christian's request that he might be sent to his home in Damascus until convalescent.

The general left, with his ill-assorted staff elbowing each other in the doorway for precedence; and I heard the Syrian swearing softly to himself for many minutes.

From Djouad Pasha came, that same afternoon, two bottles of Moselle and a flask of eau-de-Cologne, addressed to "The English guest of Turkey." In that house of a thousand and one stenches the eau-de-Cologne was welcome as a well in a pathless desert. The Syrian and I drank the wine, leaving a little in one of the bottles, to mix with the water I should take when I flitted.

The only remaining difficulty that I could overcome before starting was that of clothes. This I settled by deciding to wear, over a night-shirt, one of the smock dressing-gowns provided by the hospital. In this and a pair of slippers, and with a white towel arranged as a head-

dress, I should not look so very different from an Arab at night-time, as long as I kept moving.

Came the day when I found I could walk without pain or trouble; and although I still could scarcely see with the left eye, I determined to leave without delay, as I was in danger of being moved from Tul-Keran very shortly.

I kept awake from sunset until 3 A.M., hoping that the Austrian night-orderly would follow his usual custom of dozing, whereupon I would slip by him into the yard, and thence climb up a drain-pipe to the wall that fringed the hospital roof. But the orderly remained obstinately alert until it was too late for my attempt; for I should have to leave some hours before dawn, if I wanted to put a sufficient distance between myself and the hospital before choosing a hiding-place for the next day.

Having slept through the afternoon, I again watched during the night, and again the Austrian kept awake. On the third night I fell asleep at 2 A.M., disappointed and almost hopeless when, once more, the orderly gave me no chance.

It must have been about half an hour later when I was awakened by loud reports and by the chatter of the Turks. Guns were firing all around the town—one of them from a field fronting the hospital. I knew that they must be anti-aircraft guns. Either Tul-Keran itself was being raided, or machines were passing to bomb some other place.

The hospital was electric with disorder.

Turkish patients talked excitedly and crowded into the lower rooms. In the ward opposite mine a man who, twelve hours earlier, had undergone an operation, called loudly for help. The orderly, himself almost helpless from funk, ran across in answer to the cries.

Now, while everything and everybody was in confusion, or never was my chance to escape from the hospital. I rolled up my blanket and placed it under the quilt, so as to give the appearance of a man asleep, put on my dressing-gown, shook hands silently with the Syrian, and went out to the yard. Somebody passed close by me, towards the back-door. I dodged, and locked myself in the wash-house until he was in the house.

When all was quiet, I went into the open yard, put my parcel (the bottle of water and the store of dry bread, tied up in a towel) between my teeth, and began climbing up the drain-pipe. It was a more difficult task than I had expected. The wall was flat, and showed few cracks that could be used as footholds. I scraped the skin from face, arms, and legs as I struggled upward, a few feet at a time. At last I was high enough to touch the gutter and haul myself, with many a gasp, on to the roof's edge. While I was doing this the first disaster happened—the package fell from my mouth. I kept perfectly still, expecting a loud noise; but the parcel fell with nothing worse than a dull thud, the bottle being saved from breaking by the bread around it.

Although nobody came into the yard, I did

not go down again, for every minute counted; and, moreover, I was certain that I should not have the strength to climb that drain-pipe a second time. I determined to make the attempt without the bread and water and the towel, which was to have served as head-dress.

I clambered along the side of the roof, keeping in the shadow, until I reached the front of the building. All was clear for me—the guns were still firing, the street was deserted, and the sentry, who should have been below, had gone into the hospital for safety. I caught hold of the right-hand corner of the gutter with both hands, lowered myself until my body was dangling down with arms fully extended, and dropped.

Then came the second disaster. Although the roof was low, and the length of my body deducted five-and-three-quarter feet from the total drop, yet the shock when I touched earth was considerable. I landed purposely on my left foot, since the left leg was uninjured, but I toppled sideways and again hurt the bruised thigh. It throbbed with pain.

I lay in the shadow of the wall for a few seconds, but knowing that I could not remain there for long undiscovered, I looked around to see if the streets were clear. Not a soul was about, for the anti-aircraft guns were still barking, seemingly at nothing. I went out into the vague light of the quarter-moon, and began walking in the direction of the coast.

A hundred yards to westward brought me past the straggling line of buildings and along the open road. Then came several groups of

tents by the roadside. After I had left these behind, I cut away to the left, across open country. All this while I was in such a tense and exalted state of mind that I did not sense whether the night air was warm or cold, nor whether the ground was smooth or rough.

Pain, however, was a sensation that could not be buried by abnormal mental tension. My thigh throbbed relentlessly and maddeningly as I stumbled on, taking my direction, as best I could, from the stars.

By now the guns were silent, and people came from their hiding-places. A small band of Bedouins approached out of the dimness. I sank to the ground until they had ridden by and were on the road. Again I walked, but a few minutes later halted a second time. Two Turkish soldiers, their cloth helmets outlined against a tree, passed some distance to my right, whining an unmusical chant. I staggered forward for another hundred yards. Then, weak and half-mad with the persistent, ever-increasing ache in my thigh, I lay down in a small hollow.

The next half-hour was a very bitter period. I should never reach the coast with my injured leg, I realised. Yet here I was, wearing but a night-shirt and a dressing-gown, and helpless in Turkish territory, only a quarter of an hour's walk from the hospital whence I had tried to escape. I could go no farther—or very little farther—and if I remained in the hollow until morning I should inevitably be caught; and if I were caught, heaven only knew what would happen. And I suddenly realised that it was

cold, and that scores of mosquitoes were biting my face, arms, and legs. And the throb, throb, throbbing in the right leg continued.

Then the crescent moon disappeared, and the dark-grey light faded into a blackness that covered the crops and countryside, and, above all, myself.

I felt suicidal, and remained inert for half an hour longer. Finally, I decided that my best plan was to return to the hospital and try to re-enter it unobserved. I staggered back through the darkness, and, more by luck than judgment, hit the road. Slowly and very painfully I made my way into Tul-Keran. I passed the tents and houses without taking any precaution against being stopped and questioned; but nobody took the least notice, probably because, in the dark, my dressing-gown would look like the robe of an Arab.

I came within sight of the hospital and found the sentry strolling aimlessly in front of it, from the main gate to the side entrance round the corner. When he had turned the corner I slipped up the pathway to the front door, which, from past observation, I knew would not be locked. I had been absent for two hours, and already the first glimmer of an eastern dawn had lassoed the countryside.

I unlatched the door, entered the passage—and found myself face to face with the Austrian night-orderly. Open-eyed with wonder, he stared at my dusty, dirty dressing-gown, and my muddied legs and slippers, then grabbed me by the arm and called out, "*Der Englander!*"

CHAPTER IV.

NAZARETH; AND THE CHRISTIAN CHARITY OF A JEW.

"THE Englishman!" he repeated, gripping my arm harder than ever. Then, after a puzzled pause: "Where have you been?"

"For a walk. I was upset by the air-raid. My head has been very bad since the smash, and sometimes I don't know what I'm doing. But I'm better now, and I give my word of honour that I will stay quietly in bed. Only say nothing to the Turks."

This Austrian, although very stupid, had always seemed a good fellow; and now, on hearing the word *Ehrenwort*—word of honour—he dropped his attitude of anxiety and suspicion, and became his usual friendly self. A wounded Turk came into the passage to see what was happening, but the orderly sent him away. He withdrew with a look of surprise at my disordered appearance.

"Good," replied the Austrian. "I shall say nothing to the Turks, but when the corporal comes I must tell him, and he will tell the Herr Doktor. But I shall ask the corporal not to mention it to the others."

He led me back to the ward, and there noticed, for the first time, how a rolled-up blanket underneath the discoloured quilt made my bed seem as if it were occupied by a man.

"*Na, na,*" he said as he straightened the blanket, "this doesn't look as if you only went for a walk. Well, I have your word of honour that you will keep quiet, and the Herr Doktor must decide what is to be done."

Tired out and so despairing as to care nothing of what might happen, I fell asleep. In the heat of mid-morning I was awakened by the corporal, who told me to come with him to the doctor's room. As I limped painfully along the corridor I was still tired and but half awake, so that while I remembered something vaguely unpleasant, I could not define exactly what had happened.

"*Herr Hauptmann,*" said the corporal with a grin, "your injured leg was not improved by the walk during the air-raid"—and only then did I remember fully the bitter happenings of a few hours earlier.

Charming and decorative as ever, the blue-uniformed, much-medalled doctor rose from his chair and shook hands with exaggerated ceremony. The priest stood silent and bowed coldly, as if to imply that my misdeeds were exactly what one would expect from an admirer of Másaryk.

"Night walks," said the doctor, "are bad for people with injured legs and faces. As your medical adviser, I should advise you to remain in bed for the future."

"I hope I shall be permitted to follow your advice, Herr Doktor."

"That being so, perhaps you will tell us exactly where you went and why you did it."

Well knowing that with so many proofs of an attempted escape, anything but frankness would be futile, I admitted having tried to return to the British Army. My leg had failed me after half a mile, I added, and realising the madness of the adventure, I had tried to return unobserved.

"So! I ought to have known that you would find some chance of escape when so near the front. And now, what do you expect?"

"If I may presume on your kindness, I ask that I may stay here until sent away in the normal course of events. I hope you will let me remain in hospital, on the understanding that I give my word of honour to be good, so long as I am in Tul-Keran."

"That will be difficult. I myself have no objection, and the word of honour is guarantee enough against further wanderings. But if the news of your escapade got beyond the hospital I should be forced to make a full report."

The doctor learned from the corporal that, apart from the four of us present, the only person who knew the story was the night-orderly, who could be trusted to keep quiet. After a low-voiced discussion with the priest, he gave instructions that nobody else must be told. He then promised to make no report, unless the news leaked out, and his hand were forced thereby. I thanked him and withdrew.

But the news did leak out. Either the orderly told it, or the Turkish patient who had seen me in the passage, after my return, formed his own conclusions and communicated them to other people. At any rate, several Turks came into the ward and discussed (according to the Syrian's whispered translations) my sortie of the early morning. One man even went so far as to say that I had gone out and signalled to the British aeroplanes. The Syrian was greatly concerned about whether anybody suspected that he had been privy to the attempt, but I was able to reassure him.

Evidently the story became so widely known that the hospital authorities had to make their report. Late in the afternoon I was told to dress and collect my belongings, as the Turks were taking me from the hospital. Having obeyed, I was handed over to an escort of two Turkish soldiers, with drawn bayonets.

"Adieu," said the Syrian. "I shall pray for you and for happier times."

The doctor shook hands ceremoniously when I left, and the priest—affable once more—gave me a heavy stick to help support my thigh, saying that he hoped we should meet as friends after the war.

Bareheaded in the searing sun (for my friends had forgotten to include a hat in my kit) I was led through a gaping crowd to the railway station. There my guard joined forces with another Turk, who had in his charge the dirtiest Arab I have ever seen. His sole dress was a pair of tattered trousers and a faded overcoat,

from the left side of which a filthy naked arm protruded. His head-dress, a much-torn strip of dingy rag, seemed to have lain for a long time in some muddy pool. Clots of dirt dotted his face, his feet, and the lower part of his legs, which were bare. His moustache and straggling beard were powdered with sand and gravel; and on looking closely at his middle, where the trousers-tops gave place to uncovered flesh, I saw two lice on the inner surface of the rough cloth.

The Arab and I looked at each other curiously, after the manner of fellow-prisoners seeing each other for the first time. Then an interrogation, evidently interrupted by our arrival, was continued. This consisted of a Turkish officer shouting menaces at the Arab, who replied, whenever he was given a chance, with fluent explanations and pleading gestures. Presently a German Unteroffizier, who spoke Arabic well, and seemed to be an interpreter, joined the group. He also threatened the Arab, and I saw him place thumb and finger on his windpipe, as if to suggest strangling. This badgering of the poor brute continued until the Arab opened his hands and said something in a resigned tone. Thereat a thrill of excitement passed through the gathering; and the Turkish officer, before leaving us, wrote several lines on the official papers carried by the Arab's guard.

The Unteroffizier turned his attention to me. Finding that I could speak German, he talked of many things, from Hindenburg's advance in France to his own home in the German colony at Jaffa.

"You have a pleasant companion," he said, nodding towards the Arab.

I asked who the pleasant companion might be and what was his crime, and heard in reply a strange tale. The Arab had been found wandering suspiciously behind the front of the 8th Turkish Army. His garment was found to be a relic of what had once been an overcoat of Turkish military pattern, so that he was arrested as a deserter and possibly a spy. He told a rambling tale of how he had been a soldier in an Egyptian battalion fighting for the British, but, after undergoing torture from his officers, had escaped across the lines. Even the Turks could not be convinced that British officers tortured their men; and, the Arab having shown himself to be a liar, they were more than ever convinced that he was a spy. The Turkish officer, in the conversation I had heard, threatened to hang him unless he confessed. At last the Arab (who, in my opinion, was not a spy, whatever he might be), terror-stricken at the threat that he could only save himself from hanging by a "confession," let himself be badgered into a declaration—true or false—that he was a spy. So they hanged him, as I learned afterward, at Damascus.

For several hours we remained on the platform, where the Arab and I were rival attractions for curiosity. Then, late in the evening, we were hustled into a truck marked in German "12 horses or 40 men." As a matter of fact, more than fifty Turkish soldiers must have crowded into it before the train started. Our

party kept together in one of the corners, where we found just room enough to sit down without being trampled upon. I placed the kit-bag between myself and the Arab as a barrier against lice — although, for that matter, most of the Turkish soldiers were verminous.

That night I performed the first of many nightmare journeys on Turkish railways. Although each side of the truck was open for about three feet, the atmosphere was intensely stuffy. It was difficult to breathe when seated on the floor. The filthy crowd of Turks spat all over the place, and exuded dozens of different smells. The train jolted unevenly, with many a bump and halt, over the badly-kept track. Sleep was impossible. By the time I was hauled on to the platform at Afuleh, nine hours later, I was heavy-eyed and faint with wakefulness, weakness, and disgust.

Afuleh is but a few miles from Nazareth (then the Turco-German General Headquarters on the Palestine front), and to Nazareth we trudged. This beautiful little town is on a high hill, around which the road to it winds upward at a steep angle. With its white buildings and high setting, it shows a magnificent view as one climbs the hill. But really to enjoy it the conditions should be other than when, weak and ill and scarcely able to walk by reason of a bad leg, one must climb painfully up the steep slope, under an intense sun, with a retinue of half-savage guards.

The Arab and I were taken through the old winding streets, gaped at by listless pedestrians,

to the Turkish Platzkommandant's office. The Platzkommandant—a swollen balloon of a man—asked a question. The Arab's reply drew all eyes in my direction. Having understood only a few words of the Arabic, I wondered how I could be concerned in the charges against the pleasant companion. The Platzkommandant, after examining my papers, spoke with somebody on the telephone. Then, although not a word had been spoken to me, the Arab and I were led outside and through some narrow streets to a square stone building. Not until we were inside it did I hear, from a police-officer who spoke a little French, why I was there. Having noticed that rather more consideration was given to me than to him, and thinking he might obtain better treatment by hanging on to my coat-tails, the Arab had elaborated his story by saying that I brought him from the British Army in my aeroplane. Evidently the Platzkommandant, without giving me the chance to deny this fantastic tale, had telephoned to Turkish General Headquarters, which ordered that the "spy" and I, as accomplices in crime, should be kept together. And here we were, inside what I learned was the civil criminal jail.

I protested with ridicule against the belief in the Arab's absurd statement. I pointed out that my machine was a single-seater, and that it had been shot down in the mountains. His story was therefore impossible. The police-officer promised to forward the protests to military headquarters, but as for him, his orders were that the Arab and I were to remain together. In any

case, he added, I was probably being punished for trying to escape.

Remain together we did, in a superlatively filthy cell. I would rather live in a British jail than in most of the poorer dwellings of the Turkish provinces, where donkeys and dogs and hens and men and women and children herd together in mud huts. As for most Turkish jails, I would rather live in a British pig-sty. Even after my experience on the train from Tul-Keran, I was surprised by the first sight of that cell. The walls were neither stone nor wooden, but of hard earth, with holes and cracks all over the surface. The various kinds of dirt that crusted the floor, which must have been left uncleaned for years, had mingled and intermingled until they became a thin layer of slime, giving forth a dank odour. The room was partly underground, although the small iron-barred window, on a level with the floor of the yard and two feet below the ceiling, let in a certain amount of light. Through it crawled all sorts of insects. Hundreds of vermin were to be seen moving in and out of the fissures on the walls. Former tenants had left filth in each of the corners. The cell's dimensions were about twelve feet long, nine wide, and eight high.

Unadulterated bravery, without any trace of suppressed or subconscious fear, does not exist; wherefore, if a man who fought in the war tells you that he never felt the least bit afraid, call him a liar of the goriest. But my experience has convinced me that bravery — the sort of bravery which is self-control in the face

of danger—is the most ordinary of qualities, possessed by people of every race, sex, and age. But *endurance* is another matter. To all but the lion-hearted there comes a point at which the will to endure breaks down under abnormal strain. Being far from lion-hearted, this now happened to me. When the gendarme banged and bolted the door I became morally dead, and past caring about surroundings or events. Physical weakness, mental agony, a terrible dizziness that resulted from having been bare-headed in the Palestine sun, the succession of privations and revolting surroundings—all these combined to break my spirit. I grabbed the shrinking Arab, who evidently had not reckoned upon being left alone with me, and flung him across the cell. I then sat down in the nearest corner, and, physically and mentally sick, remained inert for many hours.

The next three days I remember as a semi-conscious nightmare. Yet a dreadful nightmare is easier to bear than a dreadful reality, because the horror of it is confined to subconsciousness, and does not touch the surface brain. So it was with me in the criminal jail of Nazareth. I sat through hours of inertia, without comprehension, energy, or a sense of my surroundings. I scarcely realised the dirt, the stench, and the general beastliness of the cell. Three times I tried to pass the door, so that I might protest to the police-officer; but I was pushed back by an incredibly stupid guard, who made frequent use of the words that every prisoner in Turkey knew so well—"*yok*" and

"*yassak*" ("not" and "forbidden"). I gave up the attempt, and relapsed into a state of moral lethargy.

The changes from night to day, from stuffy heat to damp cold, passed unnoticed. I cared little whether I lived or died. I felt no hunger and not much thirst. This was fortunate, for hunger could not have been satisfied. Each morning the guards gave us a small loaf of bad bread, in which were pieces of straw, string, and wood. A carafe was filled with water once a day, for the needs of both of us. In the evening a basin of thin soup, with mysterious chunks floating on the surface of it, was placed between us. Without being influenced by its unsavouriness, I felt not the least desire to taste the greasy liquid, the small loaf of bread being quite enough food for the day in my then state of unreal detachment from bodily needs and sensations. As for the Arab, as soon as the basin was brought he squatted on his haunches, scooped his hand into the soup, and having grabbed some floating morsel, stuffed it into his mouth. Afterwards he lapped up the liquid itself, in the manner of a dog.

On the morning of the third day we were led from the jail to be interrogated at Turkish headquarters. Although my ferocious headache still remained, the change from the dimness and closeness of the cell to the bright sunlight of the street revived me, and I sniffed the fresh air in gulps. I was passing through Nazareth, watched with sympathy by the sad-faced crowd, when I saw an officer of the German Flying

Corps. He looked at my pilot's badge and stopped, whereupon I broke away from the guards and approached him. In violent language I protested against my treatment, and asked the German, as a fellow-aviator and a fellow-European, to see that the Turks moved me from the criminal jail. The aviator happened to be a friend of Oberleutnant Wolff, who fired the shot that brought me down near Shechem; and having already heard the details of my capture, he recognised at once the absurdity of the Arab's story that I had carried him across the lines to spy for the British. He himself was furious at my bad treatment; for when not fighting each other the German and British pilots in Palestine were on the best of terms. He promised to go to German Air Headquarters and enlist its influence for me.

I left the German, and was led by the guards to Turkish Headquarters. For two hours we waited in a corridor. Then, before I had been interviewed, there arrived my friend the German pilot, with two staff officers—a monocled major and a lieutenant. I shook hands and was offered apologies for the brutalities I had suffered. It would all be right now, said the major, as the trio disappeared through the doorway of an office. They returned with a Turkish colonel, who likewise shook hands and apologised. Finally, escorted by a different guard, I was sent away without being questioned. The last I saw of the Arab was as he staggered and cringed under a box on the ear, delivered by the Turkish colonel.

Once again I was led before the Platzkommandant. Evidently his knuckles had been telephonically rapped as a result of my treatment, for he grimaced wickedly as he took my papers and ordered a room to be prepared for me in the barracks.

At first this room seemed a paradise after the slimy cell; but after a few days its tiny dimensions—ten feet long by six feet wide—seemed in my solitude to be closing in to crush me. The furniture was a bed with one greasy blanket, and a rickety little table on which stood an earthenware jar for the bad water supplied to me. The only water in Nazareth, by the way, that was not bad and liable to contain disease germs, was that drawn from the famous "Well of the Holy Virgin"; and this the German and Turkish officers and German soldiers monopolised.

Next morning I was again taken to Turkish Headquarters for interrogation. The Intelligence Officer who questioned me began by saying outright that now that I had been moved to better quarters, he expected me to show gratitude by giving information. I replied that instead of showing gratitude I ought to receive compensation. He hinted that it was in his power to move me back to the criminal jail.

"Do as you like," I replied; "but since it is obvious that you are very highly civilised, you will do nothing of the kind." Whereupon he smiled fatuously and proceeded to ask leading questions, speaking in French.

Was the report true that General Allenby had left Palestine for France?

"I really don't know. Possibly. Possibly not."

Had I seen General Allenby lately?

"No. But I have a friend who once saw him driving along a road."

Were the British preparing an attack near the coast?

"Possibly. Possibly not."

These illuminating replies were noted down, word for word, by the Intelligence Officer. His desire for details about myself was inexhaustible. I did my best to satisfy it by telling him that I was aged eighteen, had been an aviator for five years, and a soldier for six; had come from England on a ship named the *Hog-wash;* had been flying the type of aeroplane known as the Jabberwock; had belonged to No. 1 Training Squadron, the best fighting squadron in Palestine; and thought the war would continue for fifteen and a half years longer. Having presented the Turk with this medley of misinformation, and watched him transfer it to his note-book, I grew tired of invention and protested a lack of knowledge in reply to every question.

That chat and backchat with the wooden-headed Intelligence Officer was my only conversation, except a few whispered words, with a fellow-human for nearly a week. The Platzkommandant took his revenge for my complaints in two ways—by feeding me very badly, and by ordering solitary confinement.

Solitary confinement makes a man utterly wretched. Left alone and with nothing to distract his mind, a prisoner can only think, and

think, and think,—and all his thoughts are morbid. I had six matches in my pocket, and with these I invented all sorts of games and puzzles. But after a few hours my brain, refusing to concentrate on them, drifted back to the sea of bitter despair. At night-time the great difficulty was to keep my mind, not from drifting, but from *racing*. At the end of five days I was fast losing all sense of balance and normality. At times I regretted not being back in the criminal jail, with the repulsive Arab for company.

The few words I managed to exchange with the Christian woman who tidied my room each morning constituted the great event of the day. This woman — ragged, bootless, and gaunt— would whisper fierce questions in broken French as she threw water on the dusty floor, or stabbed with a hairpin some of the bed-bugs; while the guards watched through the open door to see that we did not conspire.

"Why come not English? We hungry. Pigs of Turks!"

And I had to whisper back that the English would certainly drive the pigs of Turks out of Nazareth.

When she had taken her stooping back and her patchwork clothes out of the room, I would probably not have the chance to speak with anybody, even in a whisper, for the next twenty-four hours. My sole consolation was a green hillside beneath the tiny window. For hours at a time I paced the few feet across the room and back again, then sat on the bed

and looked outside at what little I could see of Nazareth.

Several times I saw men, women, and boys walking in a huddled group, with guards around them. Some had their hands shackled, some had a chain linking one arm and one leg, and others were chained by the arm to the next person. They moved aimlessly over the hillside, presumably for exercise, while the Turkish soldiers pushed or beat any who struggled or straggled. On my sixth morning in the barracks I was visited by the Platzkommandant's aide-de-camp, just after such a party had disappeared from view. I asked if these shackled and brow-beaten prisoners were Christians.

"My dear sir," said the aide-de-camp, with all the blandness of the educated Turk when telling a lie, "we never put chains on anybody, and our Christian criminals are as well treated as anybody. You must be mistaken in what you think to have seen."

After this conversation I never again saw these groups of civilian captives at Nazareth, and I began to think that the strain of solitary confinement had focussed my brain on sights that my eyes never met. Possibly, however, the aide-de-camp had taken care that the chained prisoners should be taken for exercise on the far side of the hill.

Next day the same officer paid me another visit, as he was learning French and wanted practice. When he was in my room I noticed from the window a strange procession. A few banners were carried at the head of it, then came some

Turkish soldiers, and behind them a mass of men and women shambling along with bowed heads. Somewhere a band was blaring out the horrible whining discord which the Turks called music. Nothing more melancholy and unenthusiastic than the people's attitude could be imagined.

"What's that?" I asked.

"Two days ago the Turks gained a great victory over the British in the Jordan Valley, between Es Salt and Amman. The Governor has organised this procession to celebrate it. The population is showing its joy."

I looked at the sad-faced rabble below, and remarked that they looked more like mourners at a funeral than celebrators of joy. The Turk had spoken, however, without the least suggestion of irony.

Next day he left Nazareth for Tul-Keran. He paid a final visit, and, to my great joy, gave me "an English book," which he had bought in the bazaar. The "English book" proved to be a copy of a magazine for children, dated 1906. It was even more consciously educative in its statement of elementary principles, and more condescendingly inept in its milk-and-water stories, than the general run of such publications. Yet, in my state of solitary confinement, I revelled in every word. The children's magazine gave me as much pleasure as have the finest books in the world under normal conditions. My mind stopped racing and wandering and retrospecting while I learned all about wireless telegraphy (in twenty lines); how Joshua smote the Canaanites hip

and thigh (with an illustration of the walls of Jericho falling rhythmically before the Israelite trumpeters); how to make lemonade and seed-cake; how not to make trouble among one's schoolfellows; the birth and life of jelly-fish; and How to Set a Good Example, being an instalment of the History of Little Peter, the Boy Who Feared God, Kept His Hands Clean, and Was Always Cheerful and Respectful, and Fond of Chopping Wood for His Mother. The magazine also showed how to make hats, sailing boats, houses, and what-nots out of a plain sheet of paper—all of which I practised assiduously through a night of bug-biting sleeplessness. Best and worst of all was the five-page summary, in schoolmistress-English, of 'The Newcomes.' This had nothing in it but colourless statement of incident, and the sentiment of the book was churned into a welter of monstrous flabbiness. As a final insult "*Adsum*" was misspelt "Adsem" in the herewith gem with which the unliterary procureur completed his (or more probably her) prostitution of Thackeray's almost-masterpiece: "When the roll-call of the pensioners was made, the dying Colonel, hearing his name, lifted his poor old head, and said 'Adsem!' Then he fell back dead. 'Adsem' is a Latin word signifying that a person is present"!! Yet the protest and anger inspired by this outrage were useful in taking my mind from its lonely bitterness; and I read the child's magazine version of 'The Newcomes' many times over, until its power to irritate was expended.

After a few more days my confinement became

less solitary. The German major, whom I had already seen, visited me, with the Platzkommandant and his adjutant. He asked if I had any more complaints to make. I looked at the Platzkommandant, and said that the food was not only bad, but scarcely sufficient to keep a man alive. The fat Turk glared his wickedest, but made no comment. The German major expressed regret, and promised that meals should be sent from the General Staff's mess.

The new diet was a very welcome change from bad bread and water, varied by thin soup. Sickness made me far from hungry, however, and I was unable to eat many of the meals. The corporal of the guard, the sentry outside my door, and several of their friends would hang around in the corridor until the tray was taken from the room, then place their dirty hands in the dishes and snatch at pieces of meat or vegetable.

For me the food from the Germans was chiefly welcome in that it brought a good friend—the dragoman who came with it. He was a Jew, originally from Salonika, with a long tongue-twisting name impossible to remember. I called him Jean Willi, French being our conversational medium. He was well-to-do, had been an official of the Ottoman Bank in Constantinople, and spoke seven languages. For the first two years of war he had kept out of the army by means of *baksheesh*. Finally he was taken for service because he had offended an influential officer; but his knowledge of languages, together with various bribes placed in the right quarters, procured him

the safe appointment of dragoman to the German Headquarters at Nazareth.

Three times a day—with breakfast, lunch, and dinner—Jean Willi came to see me. He tried to come oftener, but the Turks would not admit him. Everything I wanted he would move heaven and earth to get. He "obtained" a German soldier's cap for me, on discovering that I had no hat. He persuaded the German barber to bring my lunch one day, so that he might cut my hair. A comb, a tooth-brush, soap, books, and a dozen other things were supplied by Jean Willi, who, having learned that my ready cash amounted to fourteen shillings, pretended that the articles had been sent by the German officers. Later I discovered this to be a benevolent untruth.

In the wayside fallings of a roving life I have met several Very Good Samaritans; but none other did as much for me, under great difficulties, as Jean Willi. Before meeting him I was altogether broken in spirit, and with hopelessness filling my mind had begun to fear for my reason. He understood all this, and to the limit of his powers did his best to remedy it, well knowing that his actions would bring him the enmity and suspicions of the Turkish officers. His friendly conversation and his invariable kindness were splendid tonics.

When he was away my mind was prevented from slipping back into the stagnation of despair by the books he had smuggled into my room. The first of these was a German war novel—'*Der Eiserne Mann*'—procured from a Boche soldier. It purported to show how loyal were the Alsa-

tians to the German Fatherland. It was untrue, stupidly sentimental, and often farcical; but, after all, so were most of the war novels published in England at that time. Then, in some dark recess of the house where he was billeted, he found a copy of '*Les Liaisons Dangereuses*'—an altogether extraordinary book to be salvaged from a little house in Nazareth. This was my first introduction to Barbéry d'Auréville, and joy and interest in his magnificent characterisation completed my rescue from the slough of despondency.

It was Jean Willi who first gave me an outline of Turkey's fantastic history during the war. He never tired of asking why the British left the Dardanelles. They could have forced the way through with ease had they stayed a little longer, he said, as the Turks were at their last gasp, and, having no direct communication with the Central Empires, were nearly out of ammunition. Every one in Constantinople was expecting this to happen, and most people hoped for it. The Greeks and other Christians had been ready to rise in revolt as soon as British ships entered the Sea of Marmora. All the gold had been transferred to Asia Minor, whither the Ministry intended to retire. This same story of the Turkish army being at its last gasp I heard, later, from scores of Turks, including officers who had fought on Gallipoli.

The savage onslaught of the Turks against their Christian subjects; the horrible character of the Armenian massacres; the murder of prominent Syrians; the deportation of Ottoman

Greeks; the gradual starvation of the rotten old empire, whereby hundreds of thousands died of hunger while the Germans were sending train-load after train-load of foodstuffs from the country; the ruthless execution of all who dared to oppose Enver and Talaat; the amazing bribery and speculation; the hundreds of thousands of deserters, and the scores of thousands of brigands—all this was described in such vivid detail by Jean Willi that I could scarcely believe he could be relating fact. Two-thirds of the population, he said, were pro-Entente—not only the Christians and Arabs, but the very Turks themselves—although none could or would oppose the violence of the Young Turk party. As for himself, although he had never been to England, this Jew without a country claimed to have a frantic love of the English, which he could not explain, "like the love of a man for a mistress whom he very greatly respects"—his own words.

One day there arrived four Australian aviators who had been captured in the Jordan valley. Another British officer, also, was at Nazareth in those days. W., a Yeomanryman, had been for several months in hospital with severe wounds. General Liman von Sanders, Commander-in-Chief of the Turco-German Army in Palestine, visited this hospital and promised the patients that he would recapture Jerusalem and Jaffa within three months. Incidentally he gave the Iron Cross, 4th class, to every Turkish officer in the hospital, irrespective of whether he were wounded or merely in bed with a cold. W., whom the

general presumed to be a Turk, received an Iron Cross like the other patients.

One morning the Australians and I were taken for interrogation to German headquarters. We agreed that our best plan would be to claim complete ignorance of everything connected with the war. The invariable answer of M., the first visitor to the private office of the Intelligence Officer—one Leutnant Santel—was "I don't know." When H., the second on the list, adopted the same tactics, Santel tried bluff.

"So!" he said softly, as if speaking to himself. "How happy am I that it is I and not another who makes the interrogation. Most people would order bad treatment for prisoners who refuse a correct reply. Even I may have to do thus. If the Pasha says to me, 'What have you learned from these prisoners?' and I reply, 'They say they know nothing,' he will be very angry and order severe measures."

"Uh-huh"—from H.

"Ah, sorry, I forgot you, my friend," said Santel with a start. . . . "Your aeroplanes are very useful in communicating with the Bedouins east of the Jordan, are they not?"

"I don't know."

"But I do know."

"Why ask me, then?"—the reply obvious.

"You don't know! You don't know! So! Please leave the room."

H. returned to us, and none of the remaining three were questioned that day. Leutnant Santel adopted a more subtle method next morning. With Oberleutnant von Heimburg

("brother of the famous submarine commander," as Santel introduced him), Staff Officer of the German Flying Corps at Palestine Headquarters, he came to the barracks and invited C., R., and me for a day's outing to Haifa, on condition that we gave parole until the return. We accepted and agreed; but while getting ready I remembered how, before my capture, it had been my duty to milk a German pilot of information while entertaining him, and warned the others not to be drawn into friendly talk about aeroplanes and operations.

It was as we expected. While we were driving to Afuleh aerodrome, for lunch in the Flying Corps Mess, von Heimburg and Santel refrained from any mention of the war; but at table they performed the usual trick of showing us photographs of British aerodromes and pilots, in the vain hope that on recognising them we would say something useful.

Next we travelled along a narrow-gauge line to Haifa in a swaying truck, the motive power of which was a tractor propeller, driven by a 160 h.p. Mercèdes aero-engine. Once again, over tea at the Mount Carmel Hotel in Haifa, the Germans led the talk to the war, the Palestine operations, and aeroplanes; and once again we led it back to shoes and ships and sealing-wax and cabbages and kings. When Santel betrayed a desire for knowledge of the habits and exploits of Colonel Lawrence (who was performing such magnificent work as political officer with the Arab Army of the King of the Hedjaz), H. said he had never heard of him,

but that in Australia he knew a fellow named Lawrence, who—— Santel interrupted, and did not try to conceal his annoyance. Then he began talking about Miss Gertrude Bell (an Englishwoman who has rendered brilliant political services among the Mesopotamian Arabs). This time we were able to say with truth that we knew nothing of the matter, although Santel continued to discuss and libel the lady, whom the Germans were going to shoot, he said. Von Heimburg praised the British Air Service, with many a pause that invited comment from us. The pauses remained empty, and we managed to exclude the war by pretending to compare, painstakingly and assiduously, the respective merits of English and Australian girls.

After tea, while bathing in the Mediterranean with the Germans, we saw a strange sight along the sea front. A line of not less than thirty fishing craft were left stranded on the beach, with great holes knocked in their sides, so that they might not be refloated. This drastic prevention of the use of small vessels, according to Santel, was because many Greek and Syrian fishermen had spied for the British or deserted to Cyprus.

"The same thing has happened over there," he added, pointing across the bay toward Acre, "and at other places too—Tyre, Sidon, Beyrout, and every port on the coast-lines of Syria and Asia Minor."

We noticed, however, that three boats were out at sea, presumably fishing for the tables of officers and officials.

"If we could get back here some night," whispered C., as we dressed, "we might collar one of those three boats, tow it out to sea by swimming, and sail to Jaffa." This revived my hopes of escape, for the first time since the fiasco at Tul-Keran.

"Thank you a thousand times," I said when von Heimburg and Santel left us at Nazareth. "It has been a most enjoyable day."

They agreed, without showing enthusiasm.

"But not a very successful one for you, I'm afraid," I added.

They were quiet for a minute, and then both laughed.

"So! You were prepared," said Santel. "Well, I shan't try again."

Neither Santel nor anybody else tried again to interrogate us at Nazareth. Two days later we were told to prepare for a journey to Damascus. C. had been discussing the chances of getting to the coast and stealing a boat; and when Jean Willi paid me a farewell visit, I asked him if a journey from Damascus to the coast would be difficult.

"Very difficult, indeed, under the conditions of which you are thinking." Then, after a pause, "But I will tell you something interesting, since you will probably be kept in Damascus for about a fortnight. The Armenians run secret caravans from Damascus to Akaba."

"Thank you; that's very interesting indeed." And it was, for Akaba, at the north-eastern extremity of the Red Sea, was a base of the Arab Army co-operating with the British.

Jean Willi would not listen to thanks as he said good-bye. I gave him my London address, in the sincere hope of being able, after the war, to pay him back in part for his great kindness.

I left Nazareth under much better conditions than I entered it. Accompanied by an Arab pseudo-spy, I had arrived half-crazed by weakness, pain, and disaster, with a damaged leg and a swollen face, and possessing neither hope nor a hat. I was leaving it in the company of fellow-officers, with my mind and leg and face normal again, and having not only a German hat, but renewed hopes of escape, summed up in Jean Willi's hint: "The Armenians run secret caravans from Damascus to Akaba."

CHAPTER V.

DAMASCUS; AND THE SECOND FAILURE.

NAZARETH and Damascus are wonderful names; and, apart from historical values, each, with the country around it, stands for exceptional beauty. A journey from Nazareth to Damascus, therefore, gives of the most finest pleasure, as the Greek guard of a Turkish train assured us in his most finest English. But if you wish to see Syria at its best, travel otherwise than as a prisoner of war, sitting in a dirty cattle-truck and surrounded by Turkish guards, whose natural odour gives by no means of the most finest pleasure.

Such were the conditions under which we—the four Australian officers and I—came to Damascus. All the way from Nazareth we were very closely guarded. Only three weeks earlier a British officer had escaped from Afuleh and walked forty miles before he was recaptured; so that in our case more than ordinary precautions were taken. We drove down the steep hill from Nazareth in three rickety carts. Each of the first two contained a pair of prisoners and a pair of guards with loaded rifles and

fixed bayonets; but H., whose giant height and strength the Turks respected, had a cart and two guards all to himself. Arrived at Afuleh, we sat until nightfall in a mud hut, with the local population gazing and chattering through the open door, as if we were strange animals.

We welcomed the change to a covered cattle-truck on the railway, away from prying Turks and Arabs. In this truck, with coats serving as pillows, we lay on the filthy floor throughout the night, while the train jolted eastward over the badly-kept track. Whenever I looked at the half-open shutter I met the eyes of a guard, whose business it was to prevent us from jumping into the darkness.

The next day we passed in playing poker, in looking at the wild hill-country of Samaria, and, by juggling with the few French words he could understand, in trying to tell the Arab officer in charge of us how contented were the Arabs in those parts of Palestine and Mesopotamia then occupied by the British. This man, like most of the Syrian Arabs, showed himself well-disposed to prisoners. He gave us bread and hard-boiled eggs, bought with his own money, and refused to take payment. As always, no food had been provided by the military authorities.

So we jogged on, with many a halt, across the Jordan and round and up the steep winding tracks in the hill-country beyond it. We stopped for an hour at Deraa, where a Turkish doctor with pleasant manners and a dirty hypodermic needle visited the truck. Having assured us that cholera was very prevalent in the British army,

he proceeded to inoculate us, so that we might have no chance of taking the disease to Damascus. As a matter of fact, the British army in Palestine was free from cholera, while Damascus, as we afterwards learned, was full of it. Fortunately, nothing more than sore chests resulted from the use of his rusty, unsterilised needle.

Then, just before sunset, we rounded a bend at the bottom of a hill and came upon Damascus; and, forgetful of captivity and cattle-trucks and guards and their attendant smells, I held my breath for the beauty of it. Away to the north stretched a belt of grainland, vivid in browns and greens. Beyond was a wooded area, reaching to the lower slopes of the mountain-range that extends from Lebanon to Damascus. Down the lower slopes of one of the most easterly mountains flowed the sources of Pharpar and Abana, the twin rivers. The streams twisted downward until one of them lost itself in a detached part of the old town, and the other wound a few miles farther until it curved toward the east. Damascus itself was a maze of flat buildings, squat mosques, and minaret spires, all in a uniform grey-white, as if sprinkled with the powder of time, and now smudged with faint rose by the sinking sunlight. Eastward and south-eastward stretched the great desert that led to the sites of Nineveh and Babylon, to Bagdad, to the beginnings of human history.

In Damascus, as I knew from Intelligence Officers of the Palestine army, were many friends of the British. Nearly all the population, in

fact, were secretly anti-Turk and anti-German. Could we make use of these sentiments in planning an escape? What experiences and adventures awaited us in this oldest standing city of the world, that was famous in the days of Abraham, very famous in the days of Haroun-al-Raschid, and still famous in the days of Woodrow Wilson?

The first few of these experiences were by no means pleasant. Surrounded by the gleaming bayonets and eyes of the guards, who were clearly anxious lest we should disappear in the fading light, we were hustled from the railway to the police station and locked in a tiny room for four hours. Finally, just before midnight, the police led us to Baranki Barracks, a large building used as a prison for military criminals. Tired, hungry, and disconsolate, we fell asleep on the bare bedsteads of the room assigned to us.

But not for long. It must have been about two hours later when I awoke, tingling all over and vaguely uncomfortable. To my surprise I saw that C. was standing by his bed, and, by the light of a candle, was stabbing at it. M. sat up suddenly, scratched himself, and swore softly in a series of magnificent Australian oaths. R., who had not undressed, still slumbered. Ouch! More sharp stingings came from my legs and arms. Bugs, and swarms of them!

In the prison at Nazareth I had lived with scores of the little red brutes so common in the Near East. But here there were hundreds. They were crawling down the wall, falling on the floor,

and biting every bit of flesh left exposed. I lit a candle, and found dozens on my bed.

Lying on the floor having proved to be impossible as lying on the bed, I went to the window and looked into the night, thinking of the one matter that interested me in those days —escape. Across the road was a large camp, bordered on the left by a meadow and on the right by one of the seven streams of Damascus. Straight ahead, weirdly colossal in the moonlight, were two great mountains. Beyond them, I knew, the great desert stretched through hundreds of miles to Mesopotamia. I was aware just how far the British Mesopotamian army had arrived on the way from Bagdad to Samarrah; but even if we were lucky enough to find a guide who could smuggle us into an eastward-moving caravan, it would be almost impossible to make a detour around the Turkish army; and in any case we should be dependent on the help of Kurds or Mesopotamian Arabs, who are much less estimable than the Arabs of Syria and Arabia. No, that plan was not feasible.

I considered the suggestion of C.—that we should make our way to the coast, hiding in the daytime and walking only at nights, and then, arrived at Acre or Tyre or some such seaport, commandeer a sailing-boat and make for Cyprus or Jaffa. For this plan, also, the difficulties would be many and serious. Such few boats as were still serviceable would be well guarded; and even if we managed to steal one of them, it would have to be towed into deep water by swimmers, which was scarcely practicable in the

darkness. In any case, a walk to the coast from Damascus must cover many nights. A guide would be essential, as otherwise we could not buy bread on the journey, since none of us spoke Arabic. And a guide would cost a deal of money, of which we had little.

My scheme of getting into touch with the caravans by means of which Arabs and Armenians were slipping southward from Damascus to Akaba, still seemed the best. But here, again, money would be needed, besides a reliable intermediary. Money we might obtain by smuggling a letter to the Spanish consul, who had charge of British interests in Damascus. As for an intermediary, we should have to trust the gods to give us one from among the guards. Whatever we did would have to be done quickly, for we should not be long in Damascus. By the time I had reached this conclusion I was tired enough to fall asleep despite the bugs.

The morning toilet included a ceremony that every prisoner in Turkey found necessary after travelling on the railway—a careful hunt for lice in our clothes. The search was productive, and led to talk of the plague of typhus which was being spread all over Turkey by these vermin.

For the rest of the morning nothing happened, except a short visit from the commandant. Accompanying him was a little interpreter with bent shoulders, a greasy face, and an absurdly long nose. Here, I thought, was a possible intermediary; and I asked him to return later. During the afternoon he entered softly and announced—

"I am George, interpreter of English. I friend of English, honest to God."

George was a native of Beyrout—part Syrian, part Greek, part Jew, and wholly a scoundrel. Were I writing fiction, I should call him a Syro-Phœnician, which is an impressive term but means nothing; but as George really happened, I can only describe him as a Levantine mongrel. Some time or other in his chequered life he spent three months in America, where he learned to say "Honest to God" quite well, and to speak a queer jargon of Anglo-American quite execrably. By reason of these accomplishments he became interpreter of English at Baranki Barracks. However, since he spoke French much better than he tried to speak English, conversation with him was possible. He had the Levantine habit of using "*mon cher*" in every other sentence; and this he applied to his English by saying "my dear" on the least provocation. M., who could not speak French, asked him to smuggle a letter to the Spanish consul.

"My dear," he replied, "I take it with plenty of happiness. My officer shall not know the letter, I guess."

The Spanish consul replied by return, and next day each of us was given twenty Turkish pounds —about £12 at the then rate of exchange. This rather annoyed the Turkish commandant, who had himself advanced us seven Turkish pounds each, being our first month's pay as captive officers.

With £80 between us we were now in a much better position to prepare a scheme of escape.

I decided to plumb the depths of George's "I friend of English, honest to God." We should have to take him, if possible, for if left behind he would be suspected, and the Turks might frighten him into betraying us. An opportunity came that same evening. George had been telling of the starvation in Damascus, of the hangings without trial, of the general discontent all over Syria, of the terrible conditions of his own imprisonment for sixty days because he had been suspected of being a spy.

"Wouldn't you like," said M., "to be away from this nightmare of a life and in a peaceful country like Egypt?"

"I guess yes, my dear," said George. "But I wish to quit the East and inhabit among English."

"Well," said C., "I could find you a comfortable job in Australia."

"Very obliged. I take address and write when war shall be finish."

"That's no good. None of us may be alive when the war's over. How would you like to take the job now?"

"What can you desire to cough up, my dear?"

There was an awkward pause. We were shy of carrying the matter further, for chance-met Levantines, like politicians, do not as a rule inspire confidence. Yet it had to be done. I continued the conversation in French, George's weird English not being a good medium for the discussion of secrets.

"If," I promised, "you help us to escape and come with us, we will give you not only money, but a job for life in Australia."

George's face whitened, and for the rest of that evening his hands shook with excitement.

"There is nothing I wish so much, *mon cher*," he said, "as to escape to the British. But it is very difficult, and would need much money Also, I have so little courage."

He went into the corridor to see if the guard showed suspicions. But the sentry—a black Sudanese—was sitting on the floor, gazing at and thinking of nothing, after his usual stupid fashion. George returned, and for half an hour we discussed and rediscussed possibilities. He pronounced the scheme of walking to the coast in a series of night marches, and then stealing a boat, to be impossible. The idea of joining a caravan to Akaba he judged more hopeful. That, however, would mean hiding in Damascus until the next party were ready to start; and hiding in Damascus would be not only highly dangerous but highly expensive. Anyhow, the Armenians who organised the secret caravans must be shy of adding immensely to their risks by taking British officers; and if they did take such risks they would expect more ready money than we possessed.

George was silent for several moments, then announced that he would try to find an Arab, from among his acquaintances, who would lead us to Deraa, and thence through the mountains to the Dead Sea regions. For this, also, he pointed out, money would be necessary—and gold, not paper. We could only change our paper notes at the rate of four and a half paper pounds for

one in gold. The sum obtained by this means would be too little.

"But," I said, "if we go south below the Dead Sea, to the country occupied by the Hedjaz army, we can get gold enough. Haven't you heard of the gold at Akaba, of a certain Arab emir and of certain British officers?"

"*Mon cher*, I have heard a lot of this gold, and so have many of the Arabs around here. But perhaps I shall not be able to convince my Arab friend that you could obtain some of it."

I gave George arguments enough to convince his Arab friend, and made him swear by his professed Christianity that he would keep secret our conversation. Soon afterwards he left us, still trembling with excitement.

Full of renewed hope, I looked out of the window into the Eastern evening, and speculated on what the god of chance might do for us. To be effective he would have to do a lot. There was, for example, the Austrian sentry whom I could see below, leaning against a motor-lorry. If we were active, on whatever night we fixed for our escape, how could we climb down to the ground unobserved? The window itself offered no difficulties, for it was above the street and on the first floor, so that a few bedclothes tied together would suffice to lower a man out of the barracks.

Then, while I was still watching the sentry, a different god intervened. A hooded girl sidled up to him. After looking round to see that nobody was watching, he crossed the road and disappeared with her into the meadow

to the left of the camp. An omen, I thought. If, on escape-night, chance spirited away obstacles as easily as that, all would be well.

Meanwhile the flat grey houses whitened in the light of the young moon, and the river Pharpar radiated soft shimmerings. In this respect, also, chance should favour us. From seven to ten days later, when we hoped to leave, the moon would not rise until after midnight; so that darkness would help us to slip from the barracks, and moonlight would help us as we moved across open country.

Just then my meditations were chased away by a fantastic, far-away sound. Somewhere in the maze of streets a wheezy barrel-organ was playing—and playing *funiculi, funicula!* How a barrel-organ found itself in Damascus, and in war-time Damascus, I did not try to guess. All I knew or wanted to know was that across the warm sensitive night air floated the lively tune; and if you are away from Europe, take it from me that nothing will bring you to the back streets of London, of Paris, of Naples, as vividly as a barrel-organ playing *funiculi, funicula.* Memories of ribald versions of the song's words came as a matter of course, and with them memories of the days they stood for. For long after the barrel-organ had become silent, and only the moonlight and the stillness remained, I was back in England.

Late next morning George burst into the room, with a beaming face and a palpable desire for news-telling.

"*Mon cher*," he said to me, "I have found a

Druse who will guide you. He knows about the gold, and although not quite sure, he thinks he can trust you, as British officers, to see that he gets paid. He demands two hundred pounds in gold when you reach Akaba, and fifty pounds in paper now, for the hire of horses."

I was overjoyed at this new prospect of a road to liberty; but when I had translated George's French for the benefit of the Australians, M. counselled caution.

"I don't like the sound of that fifty pounds down," he said. "Tell him we won't pay anything until we're outside Damascus and have the horses."

We decided that unless we conformed to the Oriental custom of always beating down a bargain-adversary the Arab would think we could be blackmailed for any amount of money. He might even regard too ready an acceptance of his terms as evidence that we did not mean to pay on arrival at Akaba. Finally, we told George to place the following terms before the Druse—one hundred pounds in gold on arrival, and fifty pounds paper when we were on horseback and away from Damascus. For the present, nothing. As for George himself, he should receive fifty English pounds when we reached safety, and his job in Australia.

Next day George returned from the bazaar with the reply that the Druse would be satisfied with one hundred and twenty-five pounds in gold at Akaba, and agreed to leave the question of ready money for the horses until we were out of Damascus. He demanded another twenty pounds

paper, however, for the man who was to bring back the horses after we had ridden to the mountains at Deraa. To these terms we agreed, as the withdrawal of the demand for money in advance evidenced the genuine intentions of the Arab.

"The Druse desires to spot you," said George, breaking into English. "To-morrow an officer shall lead you to public baths in city. When I say to pay attention, observe an Arab who will carry a yellow *burnous* and robe."

And so it happened. We had our bath, and, escorted by a Greek doctor in the Turkish army, with several guards and George the inevitable, we walked through the hot streets towards the bazaar.

"Honest to God!" said George suddenly—for it had been agreed that this phrase should signal the presence of the Druse.

I searched the crowd of Arabs gathered in the road at the corner of a narrow turning, and had no difficulty of picking out, right in the foreground, a fierce-moustached man, with yellow robe and yellow head-dress. One hand rested on the bone butt of a long pistol, stuck through his sash, and with the other he fingered the two rings round his *burnous*. He looked at us long and intently, especially at H., with his six feet four inches of magnificent physique, then backed into the growing crowd and disappeared.

"Look not to behind you, my dear," said George, whose inability to control himself had again blanched his face, "or my officer observe."

That walk to and from the big *hammam* (Turkish bath) in the centre of Damascus is perhaps the most vivid of my memories of the city. Everywhere a mass of Arabs, Syrians, and nondescripts surged around us, until the road was blocked and our guards had to clear the way forcibly. Bargaining at the stalls was suspended as we moved through the long covered-in bazaar, with its carpets and prayer-rugs, its blood-sausages, its necklaces in amber, turquoise, and jade, its beautiful silks and tawdry cottons, its copper and enamel work, its old swords and pistols, and its dirty second-hand clothes — all laid out haphazard for inspection. Once, when we entered a shop, the crowd that collected before it was so large that the guards took us outside by a back door.

Yet one sensed that this interest was for the most part friendly. The Arabs expected the British army sooner or later, and wanted the British army. Meanwhile they were anxious to see what manner of men were the British officers. We were not a very impressive group, with our dirty, much-creased uniforms. What saved us, from the point of view of display, was the tall upright figure and striking features of H., at whom all gazed in admiration.

As we passed through the gardens on the way home, an *imam*, from the ground below a mosque, was chanting something to a small gathering. On investigation we found a map of Gallipoli and the Dardanelles marked out in the soil fronting the mosque, with hills and trenches and guns and battleships shown

on it. The *imam* was telling the Faithful just how the unbelievers had been driven off the peninsula by the invincible Turkish army. This he did each afternoon, we were assured.

Everywhere was evidence of destitution, starvation, and squalor. The streets were utterly filthy, as if they had not been cleaned for months or years—which probably was the case. The disused tram-lines reared up two or three feet higher than the worn road, so that camels, donkeys, and pedestrians constantly tripped over them. Along the principal streets one had to turn aside, every dozen yards or so, to avoid enormous holes. Half-crumbled walls, huts, and houses were everywhere apparent. The magnificent mosque which is one of the beauties of Damascus was decaying into decrepitude, without any attempt at support or restoration.

As for the population, most were in rags, very few had boots, about one-half wore sandals, and the remainder went about barefooted. Yet even the destitute Arabs were more attractive than the well-to-do Levantines, with their frock-coats and brown boots and straw hats. All the poorer people seemed half-starved, and we must have passed hundreds of gaunt beggars —men, women, and children. Worst of all were the little babies, huddled against the walls and doorways. Ribs and bones showed through their wasted bodies, which were indescribably thin, except where the stomach, swollen out by the moistened grain which had been their only sustenance, was abnormally

fat by contrast. So weak were they that they could scarcely cry their hunger, or hold out a hand in supplication. Arab mothers, themselves on the verge of starvation, had left them, in the vain hope that Allah would provide. And neither Allah nor anybody else took the least notice, until they were dead. The police then removed their small bodies for burial, and more starving mothers left more starving babies by the roadside. The Greek doctor told me that forty such babies died in Damascus each day.

The next few days were buoyant with expectancy. We collected raisins and other foodstuffs, while George went backwards and forwards into the city to communicate with the Druse. We now hoped to leave the barracks without especial difficulty. The Austrian sentry below, we discovered, remained inside the doorway after midnight, so that it would be possible to slip down from the window without being seen or heard by him. One night we half-hitched our blankets together as a test, and found that they would be fully strong enough to bear even the weight of H., if tied to an iron bedpost.

A more difficult problem was that of the guard outside our room. There were three blacks who performed this sentry duty in turn, two Sudanese and one Senegalese — Sambo, Jumbo, and Hobo, as we called them. Jumbo and Hobo were intensely stupid and lazy. They spent their night-watches in dozing on the floor of the corridor. Our door being closed each night, conditions would be ideal if either of

them were on guard on escape-evening. Sambo was more alert. He had been a postal messenger at Khartoum, and as such spoke a certain amount of English. When Turkey entered the war, he told us, he had been travelling to Mecca for a pilgrimage, and the Turks conscripted him. Twice he had been in prison, once because he attempted to desert, and once because an Arab prisoner, whom he was guarding, escaped. Apparently he learned a lesson from this latter misfortune, for he never dozed when on sentry duty. Obviously, if he were outside our door on *the* evening, we should have to find some means of dealing with him. We sent George to buy chloroform, but he returned with the news that none could be found in Damascus. Thereupon we made a gag with a piece of pants and a chunk of rubber, to be used on Sambo if necessary.

Then, with these preliminary arrangements settled, they tumbled down like a house of cards. We were moved to a room on the north side of the building, so that a number of arrested Turkish officers might be put into our larger apartment. Our first thought, on entering the new quarters, was for the window. Ten thousand curses! It looked on to an open court-yard. Two sentries promenaded the yard, which was surrounded by a brick wall.

"My dear," said George when he next visited us, "the business is lost. It is by all means impossible to hop from window without observation from Turks."

For hours the Australians and I sought a

way out of the new difficulty — and sought vainly, for it was George whose cunning rescued our plan from the blind alley into which it had been driven. He would leave his rifle at the top of the back stairway, he said, then come to our room and usher us along the corridor, after telling the black guard that he was taking us to an officer's room (as often happened in the evening). Next he would recover his rifle, slip down the stairway to the Austrian section of the barracks, and, with bayonet fixed, lead us out of the side-door guarded by an Austrian sentry. The advantage of the Austrian door was that the sentry, seeing a Turkish soldier walking out with prisoners, would think he was taking them to the railway station, or not think about the matter at all; whereas the Turkish guard at the main door would have recognised George, and known that something was wrong.

George could not take more than three of us, as a larger number with only one guard would make even the Austrian suspicious. He refused point-blank to return to the barracks and repeat the performance, so that four of us might go. C. could not come, for personal reasons that would not allow him to let his fate remain unknown for several months. The party, however, was still one too many. With a pack of cards we settled the problem of who was to stay behind. M. cut lowest, to his bitter disappointment and my regret, for he was very plucky and resourceful.

Once more with a definite plan in view—and

apparently a better one than the last—H., R. and I fixed a date for the escape. Having calculated the times of the rising and setting of the moon, and communicated with the Druse, we chose the third evening from the day of our removal to the new room.

Meanwhile we had been treated by no means badly. A few nights of irritation accustomed us to the plague of bugs, and constant searching and washing kept our clothes fairly free from more repulsive vermin. For the rest, we passed the days with poker, bridge, and perfecting our plans. We could not grumble at the food, for we messed with the Turkish officers, who, while not feeding as well as German privates, never actually went hungry. Indeed, we met with much kindness and consideration at Damascus. In every prison camp of Turkey the officers and guards took their cue from the commandant. If, as at Afion-kara-Hissar during the reign of one Muslum Bey, the commandant was a murderer, a thief, and a degenerate, unspeakable outrages were committed. If, as at Baranki Barracks, Damascus, in the days of Mahmoud Ali Bey, the commandant was good-natured, conditions were passable.

Some of the Turks, in fact, wanted to be too friendly. The deputy-commandant invited us into his room one evening, and with his friends sitting around and George acting as interpreter, asked for an exposition of England's reasons for taking part in the war. For two hours I delivered myself of propaganda, though I could not tell what force remained in

my arguments after they had passed through the filter of George's curious translation. Meanwhile the deputy-commandant looked at his finger-nails and occasionally smiled. He was non-committal in expressing his own views; but afterwards, when coffee was handed round, he declared that the talk had been of the greatest interest. This same officer drove us one afternoon to the beautiful spot, on a high slope outside the city, where the sources of the Seven Rivers are gathered within a space of fifty yards. In the scorching heat we undressed and bathed in the river Abana.

Nahed Effendi Malek, the young Arab adjutant, often visited us with his friend the Arab quartermaster, when no Turkish officers were near. The pair talked the most violent sedition. The quartermaster wanted to be with his brother, a prisoner at Alexandria. The Turks knew this, and once, when in prison for several weeks as a political suspect, he had been freed only by a liberal distribution of *baksheesh* among the military authorities. Both he and Nahed were kept separate from their families, while the Turks levied blackmail by telling them that the lives of relatives or friends would pay forfeit for any breach of loyalty. Like all officers of their race, they were now kept expressly from the fighting front, because so many Arabs had deserted to the British.

This very barracks, declared Nahed, was full of imprisoned officers whose loyalty the Turks suspected. Unless they could bribe their way to a release they might be shut in one small

room for months, unpaid, forgotten, and living on such food as their friends provided. Then, if their prayers and petitions brought about a court-martial, they might be acquitted and graciously released; but neither reparation for the months of captivity nor military pay for the period of it would be given.

Our own room had lately been occupied by a Turkish colonel who shot dead a fellow-officer. Assassination being a less serious crime than dislike of oppression, and the colonel having been an expert juggler with military supplies and funds (like so many Turkish colonels, who bought the command of their units as an investment in the colossal corporation of Military Graft, Unlimited), he delivered sealed envelopes to various high officers and officials, and within a week was free.

Nahed and his friend talked savagely of the hunger and misery that ravaged Syria, of the killing and imprisonment of various sheikhs, of their hopes of an independent Arab kingdom, of their galling helplessness against the Turks and Germans until the British arrived.

"But once let the British reach Deraa," said Nahed Effendi, "and you will hear of an uprising such as Syria has forgotten long since" —a prediction that was to be fulfilled in the following autumn during General Allenby's whirlwind advance,

Sometimes, instead of confiding their wrongs and hatreds, Nahed and his friend would chant Arabian songs of love and war, or order George to translate the stories and epigrams of Haroun-

al-Raschid and other notabilities. Once George substituted a sentence of his own for the tale he should have retailed for our benefit.

"My dear, I must go to city to see my friend. Soon it is too late, honest to God, and my officers say no. Please consider some request I perform for you."

M. laughed, as if in enjoyment at a translated story, and H., turning to Nahed, said, "*Kweis kateer*" (Very good)—two of the dozen Arabic words that he knew. A little later I asked for and received permission to send George to buy wine for us in the bazaar; and the mongrel interpreter, with a "*Mille fois merci, mon cher,*" shambled off to see the Druse.

We realised that it would be very unfortunate for little Nahed if we escaped, and we should be sorry indeed to think of him in prison on our account. But it was obvious that even if he would, he could not come with us; and we certainly dared not confide in him.

As I lay half awake, early in the morning of May 15, I was conscious that an exceptional day had dawned; but my drowsy faculties could not produce, from the dark-room of memory, a negative of what was imminent. Then the door opened, and with a clatter of mugs and a cry of the German word "*Milch!*" there entered a Syrian milkman, with his tin barrel slung over his shoulder. I was alert in an instant. Why, of course, we had reached escape-day, and we must buy a stock of biscuits for a journey from this dairyman, whose privilege it was to sell us goat's milk, at five piastres a glass, for our break-

fast. But that morning he had omitted to bring the usual biscuits—and this was the first of a heartbreaking sequence of mischances.

Throughout the day I remained in a state of high tension. Yet my principal concern was for the lack of self-control shown by George, who walked about with shaking knees and unsteady hands and anxious face.

"For God's sake don't show yourself like that to the Turkish officers," said H.

"My dear, I am not brave, and fortune never visits me." His fear was pitiful.

"Pray for fortune, then."

And George prayed, melodramatically and in all solemnity: "God, what is in heaven, take us to Arab with horses."

The thermometer of hope quicksilvered up and down every few minutes throughout the pregnant hours of afternoon. For the ninety-ninth time I examined the packets of rasins, the bread and the water-bottles; for the hundredth time I reviewed the details of our plan. Between ten P.M. and midnight the Druse was to wait by the station, with long head-dresses that should be disguise enough for the moment, since in the darkness a passer-by could only see us as silhouetted outlines. Soon after ten George was to take H., R., and me through the side-door, and lead us to the Druse. Then we would slip out of Damascus to the spot where another Arab was waiting with the horses. We must ride over the plain all night and hide the next day in a certain Druse village, where a hut had been prepared for us. We could buy

arms in the village. We would travel without rest throughout the following night, and just before dawn reach the mountains outside Deraa, when the second Arab was to take back the horses. Once in the mountains and among the Druses, an army could scarcely retrieve us. We should run more than a little danger from nomads; but these might be friendly, and in any case the Druse guide would be our protector and mouthpiece among his fellows. For weeks we should be trekking over the mountains and desert, east of the Turkish lines in the Jordan valley, and the hardships would be very great. Eventually we should arrive among our allies of the Hedjaz. Having reached Akaba and paid off the Druse, we could be taken on board one of the British ships in the Red Sea. We might well meet a raiding party of the Emir Feisul's Bedouins near Amman, in which case safety would come much sooner, and we could travel by aeroplane to the British army in Palestine.

After dinner the signals officer invited us to his room for coffee. Having no legitimate excuse for declining, we chafed under his small-talk until nine o'clock. Then Nahed Effendi and the quartermaster visited us, and again we were forced to sit still and deliver from time to time, in response to the translations of George, a fretful "Yes" or "No," or "Good" or "Thank you." Ten o'clock came and went, and two suggestions that we should retire to bed were brushed aside by our visitors. By now the Druse would be waiting for us outside the railway station. Eleven o'clock arrived, and still Nahed con-

tinued to draw from his endless store of tales and similes.

"My officer say," announced George, "that Arabian poet compare the breasts of a fellow's beloved to—please, my dear,' say you go to bed.' I shake, and feel I must chuck sponge. Soon it is too late to leave, honest to God."

Ourselves almost desperate with annoyance, we performed a series of lifelike yawns, and declared ourselves to be very tired. Thereupon, to my great relief, the Arab officers withdrew, with George in attendance. I followed to the doorway and spoke to George when the officers had entered their own room.

"In three minutes you must come back."

"I will try, but I have so little courage."

"Think of the job in Australia, and of the money."

"*Mon cher*, I have thought of them all day. But my heart is saying '*boum, boum,*' and a voice tells to me '*Quittez ça!*' But I will come back."

He did not come back. Before George had left me, evil chance sent the Turkish deputy-commandant along the passage for one of his rare visits of inspection. When he looked at us George's overwrought nerves snapped, and he broke down utterly. "*Aa-ee!*" he called. Next, he grasped instinctively at my arm. Trembling, he lowered his head and waited. I backed into the doorway while the deputy-commandant took him to Nahed's room.

What followed we could deduce from the noises that swept the corridor. George was bullied into complete betrayal. We heard fu-

rious talk, shouted orders, and the unmistakable sound of blows with the bare hand. Nahed ran to our room and counted us. Then came the corporal of the guard, puzzled and scowling. Finally, six Turkish soldiers replaced Jumbo outside the door, which Nahed locked from the outside.

Disgusted with George, disgusted with ourselves, and, above all, disgusted with fate, H. and I paced up and down, or lay sleepless on the bedstead through hours of utter despair. R., the only one of us to make a show of indifference, took a pack of cards, played patience, and said not a word.

The door remained locked until the following midday, when the commandant arrived with Nahed and George, both of whom showed reluctance to enter.

"My officer know," declared George, with eyes averted. "You are to collect the clothes and go to railway. They send you to Aleppo, I guess." I noticed that one of his eyes was discoloured and swollen.

The commandant searched our kits very carefully, but confiscated nothing, not even the store of food. Then he demanded why we had wanted to escape, and who had been helping us.

"Tell him we refuse to say anything," M. answered. And with that he had to be content.

Surrounded by no less than twelve guards, we carried our few belongings to the railway station and entrucked for Aleppo. The interpreter stayed with the Turkish lieutenant in charge of us until the train left.

We took care not to look at George, but I could sense his misery and shamefaced discomfort. At length, for the first time since the betrayal, he showed sincerity with an agonised sentence in French, spoken from the steps of the truck—

"I am mad with sorrow. I ask pardon."

Obviously he expected and hoped for an answer; but nobody took the least notice. It was as if we had not heard.

"My officer has beaten me, and he will beat me again. My face is big with hurts—see."

Still no reply. Then, faintly, as the Turkish officer called him down from the steps: "I have so little courage. I ask pardon."

The appeal went home, and I half-turned my head. But the bitterness of betrayal was too great, and thinking that a few beatings were not punishment enough, I could offer no comfort and continued to ignore him.

As the train chugged across Syria towards Aleppo we wondered often what our own punishment would be. But still more often I called to mind a futile little figure with bent shoulders, a greasy face, an absurdly long nose, and an eye that was discoloured and swollen, saying with despair in his voice: "I have so little courage. I ask pardon." And I regretted not having turned my head to look George in the face and answer him.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BERLIN-BAGDAD RAILWAY; AND THE AEROPLANES THAT NEVER FLEW.

A SOLDIER out of the combat is not necessarily a soldier *hors de combat.*

Ambition can translate great dreams into great achievement. Misapplied ambition often loses the fruits of such achievement.

Four thousand miles of dislike, distrust, and disorganisation separate Berlin from Bagdad. Four thousand miles of friendship and (except for one short distance) continuous railway communication join London to Bagdad.

All of which diverse and disconnected statements shall be linked together in the tale of the Tunnel, the Tommies, and the Aeroplanes that Never Flew.

. . . . . .

Before the train left Damascus two more prisoners joined the party—W., who had been in hospital at Nazareth for five months, and P., recently captured in the Jordan valley.

Made desperate by the failure to escape from Damascus, some of us were ready to try without forethought any impossible plan that was sug-

gested between a halt and a halt, as we journeyed towards Aleppo. H. and I decided that if the train slowed down we would jump from it and make for the mountains. Then, at evening, we could find the German aerodrome and try to steal a machine, if this might be done against such possible odds as alert sentries, well-guarded hangars, and empty petrol-tanks. Once aboard the aeroplane we would fly south to the Palestine front. Luckily, perhaps, the train continued at a speed which made any leap from it impossible.

Two rather better opportunities were provided by the officer in charge of our guards—a young Turk who was fanatical and unbelievably stupid. The party occupied two compartments — one containing three prisoners, the officer, and a Turkish soldier, and the other the remaining four prisoners, a corporal, and a third guard. The officer paid us not the least attention, whether to prevent a possible escape, to provide us with food, or even to count his prisoners from time to time. At sunset he turned to the south and murmured his prayers; and at odd moments throughout the day, with head on breast, he muttered passages from the Koran. Nobody but Allah, Mohammed, and his fanatical little self seemed to interest him. He had a basket of bread and dried meat for himself —but only for himself.

After ten hours of foodlessness we stopped for a while at Homs, and in broken Arabic we demanded food. He pointed to a man who was selling bread and hard-boiled eggs, explained that we were at liberty to buy from this hawker, and

resumed his meditation. We left the train without hindrance, and mingled with the people on the platform. Two of us, at least, could have slipped away, with the crowd as screen. But the nearest point on the coast was far distant, and with neither compass nor a supply of food, to make the attempt in our uniforms would have been madness.

On this station I got into conversation with a Syrian woman from Lebanon, and from her learned of the dreadful conditions in that province. The crops had been commandeered, the cedars and the fruit-trees cut down by the Turks for fuel, the population were being systematically starved. Already thirty per cent of them had died of destitution, she declared, including her father and her two children. She herself had come to Homs, because there food and money were rather more plentiful.

"The people of Lebanon perish, and neither God nor any one else helps us." This in a tone of dull hopelessness, as if she were beyond even despair. And even as she said it, many a train-load of Syrian and Anatolian grain was on the way to Germany.

The second chance came at Hamah, where we halted at dusk for half an hour. A little restaurant faced our compartment, and, still being hungry, we made for it. The young officer ordered us to stop; while a guard, running from the train, clutched at H.'s arm, H. shook him off like a horse shaking off a fly, said "mungaree" (his version of the Arabic word for food), and proceeded toward the restaurant. The Turkish

officer continued to protest, but when we took not the slightest notice he joined us at the buffet, where for the price of eight shillings one could buy a plate of goat's meat and beans, with bread and coffee. Afterwards, while the Turk went outside with four of our number, H., M., and I stayed behind to buy bread.

When we returned to the platform not a guard was in sight. Moreover, our train had shunted backward. To reach it we should have to walk over fifty yards. Ahead of us we could see the little fanatic, unconscious as ever of our location, walking between the rails with the remainder of the party.

"You're the linguist," said H. to me. "Hop back quickly and buy all the grub you can find."

"Twelve loaves of bread, twenty hard-boiled eggs, and some raisins," I demanded of the waiter in the buffet.

He disappeared into the back room while I waited, uncomfortable under the curious glances at my faded uniform.

"A German aviator," I heard one man tell his woman companion.

The waiter found that he could supply only three small loaves and a dozen eggs. With these tied in a bundle I returned to H. and M. The military guard of the station was at the farther end of the platform. To avoid him we had to walk along the line, in the direction of our own train. We intended to dodge behind some waiting trucks about twenty yards ahead, slip over the siding in which they stood, and so to open country.

Then, as we were moving up the line, the mad

adventure was made impossible. Two of the guards came running towards us. We continued calmly in their direction, so that they showed no suspicion and evidently thought we were alone as a result of misunderstanding.

"*Saa-eeda,*" said H. blandly, as he offered them cigarettes; and this greeting disposed of whatever doubts they may have had. Yet the state of funk into which our short absence plunged the Turkish officer had the effect of a shower-bath upon him. He roused himself from the torpor of unintelligent disregard, and for the rest of the journey we were never allowed outside the carriage. Thus, once again, an unworkable plan fell through at the outset; for with no guide, no compass, no water, and the necessity of buying more food, the odds would have been a hundred to one against our reaching the coast. And even if we had reached the coast, it was improbable that we should have found a sailing-boat waiting to be stolen.

At Aleppo we came upon some Indian prisoners. We were trudging along the hot uneven road from the railway station when three khaki-turbaned figures saluted from the balcony of a hospital. One of them placed a crutch under his left armpit as he stood to attention. The simple salute warmed the heart, with its reminder that we were not altogether outcasts. We returned it with gusto—as did a passing German officer, who thought it was meant for him.

We were taken to an hotel where transient Turkish officers halted on their way to Palestine

and Mesopotamia. Fresh from the failure to escape from Damascus, we were unsurprised at never being allowed to leave the building. Indeed, I was astonished that we had not been sent to some prison, and presumed that punishment must be waiting for us farther down the line. For the rest, we spent several by no means uncomfortable days at Aleppo, helped thereto by sight-seeing from the balcony.

The market-place fronting the street corner below was used as a food bazaar. Each evening Arab and Syrian hucksters arrived with their flat barrows, or erected their rickety stalls. Then, from baskets and panniers, they produced their wares, which they laid out for inspection—loaves of bread, bowls of sour milk, basins of stew, cooked potatoes, roasted meats, vegetables, cakes, nuts, or lengths of flexible candy. As the crowd began to gather, gendarmes circulated among the vendors, looking for such as had not paid police *baksheesh* for their pitch. Having found a victim, the policeman would lead him around the corner to settle accounts; after which the stall-keeper was at liberty to trade for the rest of the evening. Any who could not or would not pay were hustled from the market-place.

Then, until about midnight, were acted a succession of minor comedies, amusing or pathetic. Trial by taste was evidently the custom; and since Allah had provided hands and mouths, why use forks and spoons? Intending buyers dug their fingers into the steaming dishes, pulled out a chunk of meat or a potato, and chewed reflec-

tively. Then they either purchased or passed on to the next stall, while somebody else followed and stuffed a hand into the dish. I traced a few men and women who, by tasting meat at one stall, potato at another and bread at a third, must have eaten quite a meal for nothing. This was rare, however, for the hucksters had an uncanny instinct for real buyers, and ready kicks for such as were not.

Over there is a seller of vegetables who has dodged his dues to the gendarme, apparently because his ready cash is insufficient. As the gendarme approaches he picks up his basket, with the wooden box on which it rests, and fades into the crowd. When the policeman has gone he reappears and resumes business. Twice more must he shut up shop, for a quarter of an hour at a time, until finally his takings allow him to pay the required bribe. His wife guards the stall while he confers with the policeman round the corner. He reappears, and, no longer obliged to shun overmuch attention, cries his wares loudly and does a roaring trade.

The candy-barrows are mostly kept by small boys, comically dignified in apron and fez. Useless for an adult to think that their youth makes them easy game, for they are sharp as pawnbrokers, and can tell in the fraction of a second a bad note or coin. Most of them seem to have a working arrangement with some gendarme, whereby if a man tries to take advantage of their weakness they shriek invectives. The gendarme then strolls leisurely towards the stall, and the would-be cheat wishes he hadn't.

One or two seedy ruffians hang around the fringe of the crowd, awaiting an opportunity for some petty villainy. Presently, out of the crush comes a little Syrian girl, carrying a bowl of milk. A much-moustached, dirty-robed Arab follows her into the entrance of a narrow street, where he grabs the milk, drinks it, pushes the bowl back into her hands, and strides away. The little girl attracts a certain amount of attention by shrilling her protests; but the wolfish milk-drinker has vanished. A gendarme spectator makes no pretence at interference, not having been bribed to protect stray children.

Soon afterwards a similar outrage is perpetrated by a similar ruffian, who snatches a chunk of meat from an old woman's basin of stew. In this case retribution comes swiftly and suitably. The Man who Grabs Meat has failed to notice that the weak old woman is attended by a strong young man, who has lagged behind to talk to a friend. The strong young man leaps at the thief, kicks him in the stomach—hard—knocks him down when he doubles up helplessly, and proceeds to beat him. The old woman shrieks her venom. The gendarme is much amused.

Through the changing crowd pass the vendors of drinks, clanging a brass cup against a brass can to court attention, but neither washing nor rinsing the cup after somebody has drunk from it. From time to time a stall-keeper slips away for a glass of *árak* in the near-by café, while a wife or a friend guards his barrow.

Between eleven o'clock and midnight most of

the traders run out of stock. They pack up their kit, and before leaving bargain with each other over an exchange of surplus foodstuffs for their mutual uses—two loaves for a dish of vegetables, a can of milk for three slices of meat. The streets empty, the cries cease, the gendarmes disappear with their *baksheesh;* and we retire to join the little things that hop and crawl in our beds.

With such sights and sounds we whiled away our confinement at Aleppo. Always there was something to distract us. A Mohammedan official of the Indian Postal Service, for example, provided an interesting study. With only a fez differentiating his uniform from that of most native officers of the Indian Army, we accepted him at first as a fellow-prisoner. But when, at table, he asked leading questions about the Palestine operations, H. winked at me and fingered his lips as a signal. We took the hint, and answered very vaguely.

"Don't like the look of the little blighter," said H. after dinner; "let's watch him."

He was worth watching. Every day, we found, he walked about the streets of Aleppo without a guard. Moreover, he was living by himself in a comfortable room. While this exceptional treatment of a prisoner did not prove treachery, the circumstantial evidence seemed fairly damning. We became as unopened clams when he talked to us. This was the right attitude—for later, when at a concentration camp, we heard many suggestions that he might be a traitor. Sometimes he was seen enjoying himself at

Constantinople, sometimes he talked in railway trains to newly-captured prisoners, sometimes he talked with them in hospitals. Once, in a hospital at Mosul, he was placed next to a wounded officer taken in a recent battle. His assumed complaint was influenza. Yet he was given full diet, and his temperature remained normal, while he lay in bed and asked questions about the Mesopotamian campaign.

A prisoner of war in the East, far more than the traveller, senses the spirit of his surroundings. Temporarily he is of the East. Of necessity his captors regard him as something more intimate than the transient Westerner who, while moving freely among them, lives according to Western custom and tradition; and of necessity the man who is forced to live among Easterns, and according to Eastern regulations, is more likely to realise the mental attitude whereby the crooked road is chosen in preference to the straight, to-morrow never comes, anything unexpected and fantastic may happen at any time, and—to repeat an illustration of my friend Jean Willi the dragoman—a man may get married in the morning and be a solitary fugitive for his life in the evening.

So it was with us. The continuity of strange impressions and experiences reacted on me till I forgot to remember that I was an ordinary Englishman, and became as fatalistic and unsurprised as the Turks and Arabs themselves. Somewhere or other, I knew, we should be punished for having wanted to escape. Of what the punish-

ment might consist we guessed nothing, except that it would probably find us quite unprepared. Meanwhile it was of absorbing interest to sit on the balcony at Aleppo and study the motley crowd in the bazaar.

On leaving Aleppo we knew neither the next stage of the journey nor our ultimate destination; and we were content that it should be so, for a future that is certain to be unpleasant is better indefinite than definite. This time our escort consisted of a gendarme and two soldiers. First we were herded into a third-class compartment that was windowless and altogether filthy. Already, before we arrived, it was crowded with unwashed and unkempt peasants, so that our party of eleven was able to occupy seven seats only. The gendarme, who could murder French, advised us never to place our few belongings out of reach, "or," said he, "we meet darkness and—pouf!—everything vanish."

We liked the looks of neither the carriage nor the fellow-passengers, and thought how much more pleasant a goods truck would be. R. and I persuaded the gendarme to take us to the office of the station commandant, in the hope of being allotted different quarters. The commandant was polite, but pretended that he could offer nothing better. Then, as we passed along the platform, I saw a clean covered-in truck, with a few German soldiers inside it. One man leaned idly against the entrance, and I asked him politely if, since there was so much room to spare, they could lend us a corner.

"*Ausgeschlossen!*" he growled. "*Wir wollen keine Engländer.*"

We were about to move on, when—"*Wass gibt's?*" called a Feldwebel, as he stepped from the truck.

I explained that seven British officers, two of them wounded, longed for floor-space, so that they would not be herded with odorous Turks.

"Perhaps we can manage it," said the Feldwebel.

"What's Paris like now?" he asked suddenly, and went on to explain that before the war he was a bank clerk there. With one eye on the coveted space in the truck, I admitted to having lived for a time on the *rive gauche*, discussed peace-time and war-time Paris, and even—for one will put up with a lot to avoid travelling in a Turkish third-class carriage—listened patiently to the German's reminiscences of a love affair with a French singer. This patience was worth while. He took a referendum of his five companions; and all, except the surly brute to whom I had first spoken, agreed to cede half the truck. The Feldwebel asked permission of a German major to ask us inside, and the major agreed.

"But only because you happen to be fellow-Europeans," he explained, "while the Turks are not."

A small bribe to the gendarme, and we moved thankfully from the Turkish compartment. There was room enough for all, prisoners and guards, to lie on the floor of the truck, so that by comparison we travelled in luxury. The Ger-

mans were friendly; and the Feldwebel, after I had pretended to be interested in more tales of his *affaires de corps*, offered us a supply of tea, with the loan of a spirit-stove for boiling it.

So, with poker and talk, we travelled across Asia Minor. On three of the next four evenings a certain amount of excitement was produced by Turkish soldiers' attempts to desert when the train halted. They ran toward the hill country, sometimes fired upon and sometimes chased. Several were captured, several got away and went to swell the huge total of brigands.

In that part of 1918 the number of brigands all over Turkey was enormous. Hundreds of thousands deserted from the army, and of these scores of thousands took to the mountains and wild places of Asia Minor, there to become robbers. Travelling on foot, on horseback, or on donkey-back across Anatolia was unsafe in the highest degree. In every fastness one would be certain to meet a band of armed ruffians, destitute and utterly merciless, who would cheerfully kill for the sake of a pair of boots or a shirt. More than a few German soldiers who had walked a mile or two from the beaten track were killed by brigands. Many of the gendarmes sent to deal with the robber bands were found dead, with their heads battered. Many others were hand-and-glove with them, and gave information of possible plunder. Sometimes a gang would descend on a village, kill a few inhabitants as a warning to the others, and proceed to steal everything worth the stealing before they retired.

We detrained on the eastern side of the Taurus, and were transferred to the narrow-gauge line that traversed the great Taurus tunnel before the broad-gauge railway was completed. For eight hours, on a swaying little train with miniature engine, we moved through the tunnel's half-light, with an occasional interval of sunlight at gaps between the mountains.

The great tunnel was the solution of the most formidable obstacle to the Berlin-Bagdad Railway. With Serbia overrun and Bulgaria and Turkey as allies, the line from Berlin to Constantinople was straightforward; and already in 1915 the Anatolian Railway linked Constantinople to Konia. At the eastern end of the Berlin-Bagdad chain the line from Bagdad—once Turkey should have regained it—could be extended across the desert to Mosul. The stretch of country from Mosul to Aleppo would offer no difficulties. Between Konia and the line from Aleppo, however, was the great natural barrier of the Taurus Mountains.

The rock stratum in the Taurus is among the hardest in the world. For many months it resisted all ordinary drills. The Berlin-Bagdad Railway Company caused various special drills to be made, and then, after infinite labour and experiment, began boring slowly through the rock. The natural difficulties—precipices, steep slopes, chasms, and gorges—were tremendous. Nobody who has passed through the hollowed rock can deny that the tunnel is a magnificent piece of engineering, especially the suspension bridge across a giant gorge on the western slope.

Trains began running through the Taurus, along the broad-gauge line, just before the Armistice; and the Berlin-Bagdad Railway, including this wonderful tunnel, then became the London-Bagdad Railway. Already the rails stretch eastward to Mosul, while the westward rails from Bagdad are fast moving from Samarrah to Mosul. These, when completed, will be the last links in a railway chain from Boulogne to Bagdad. When and if a Channel Tunnel is constructed, the railway will stretch, without a break, from London to Bagdad.

Throughout the war this work on the Anatolian Railway was done mainly by British Tommies and Indian soldiers, mostly picked from among the survivors of the captured garrison of Kut-el-Amara. With them were a few German technicians, some Turkish guards, and many Turkish labourers. As workmen the Turks were hopeless, except when set to tasks that required no intelligence; and even then they shirked. The Tommies, who were better paid and fed by the Germans than were the prisoners working for the Turks, established a curious ascendancy. If it suited them they did four times the work of the Turks. They were intelligent and could be trusted. It was not long before some of them were in charge of Turkish gangs. Several filled positions of importance, with good salaries and plenty of freedom.

Having emerged from the turmoil and halted for a few hours at Belamedik, we were greeted by groups of these prisoner-officials, eager for news of the war. They wore civilian clothes,

furnished by the Dutch Legation at Constantinople. Such as had clean collars and hats were greeted with the title of "Effendi" by the Turkish labourers. One Tommy had charge of all the office staff, with Greek clerks under him. Another—an Australian—was paymaster of this section of the construction department. Thousands of pounds passed through his hands each month; and the German officials trusted him implicitly. It was a fantastic position—British prisoners of war in the wildest part of Anatolia, as valued employees of a great engineering company controlled by Germans.

From Belamedik we proceeded to Bosanti, where, in those days, the broad-gauge line ended and the narrow-gauge line began. There we stayed for a night and a morning. At Bosanti, also, was a gang of British prisoners. Six of them took us to their hut and demanded the latest war news. At that time we had little that was good to tell. The German drive towards Amiens and Paris was in full swing, the Italians had been badly beaten on the Piave, the tonnage sunk by submarines was enormous. Our one bright item of news was that thousands of Americans were pouring into France daily. This fact greatly surprised the prisoners, who, from what they had been told by the Germans or had read in the Turkish papers, thought that no American troops could have arrived on the Western front.

Having distracted the guards' attention by giving them cups of coffee in the far corner of

the hut, the Tommies proceeded to reveal a plan of escape. A party of five—two Australians, two Englishmen, and a French petty officer from a captured submarine—had built a collapsible boat. In three weeks' time they would apply for twenty-four hours' rest from work, a privilege allowed by the German supervisors every three months. Carrying the boat in sections and enough food for a fortnight they would then slip away, and begin tramping towards the coast near Mersina. They expected to be walking for about ten days, after which they would assemble the boat at night and put to sea, in the hope of either being picked up by an allied vessel or of sailing to Cyprus. Five months had passed in building the boat, the work being done inside the hut at odd moments, sometimes by day and sometimes by night, but always with a man on the look-out for intruders. Tools, strips of metal, and a huge sheet of canvas had been smuggled out of the German workshops.

After making sure that the guards were unsuspicious, an Australian lifted the tip of a plank beneath his bed and extracted one of the steel ribs. It was beautifully made, with folding joint in the centre and clasp and socket at either extremity. He likewise produced a compass and a revolver, bought secretly from a friendly Austrian. Both these articles would be highly necessary—the compass because they would be unable to follow the road, and the revolver because they would be certain to meet brigands.

One can imagine the determination and perseverance that made possible these long hours of secret work on the collapsible boat, during months of careful designing, of filching the required materials, of odd-moment construction under great difficulty, always with the urgent fear of discovery.

I wish it were possible to tell of their success. Some weeks after we left Bosanti they slipped away, according to plan. Carrying the boat in sections, besides food and the oars, they walked in night-marches across the mountains and down the wild slopes fronting the coast. Three times they met brigands, but the revolver enabled them to bluff their way through. And then, when already within sight of the sea, a gendarme found them. Four of the plucky five were captured, while the fifth managed to hide, with the complete framework of the boat. That night he dragged it down to the deserted part of the beach. On the following night he pieced it together. He put to sea, and for several hours made a desperate effort to leave the coast; but the shoreward currents were too strong for him, and the weak little craft drifted back. He was recaptured, and sent to join the other adventurers in prison.

In the morning, while waiting for our train, we watched the Tommies at work. Six aeroplanes were on their way to Palestine, and the prisoners were told to transfer them to the small-gauge railway that ran through the tunnel. The men seemed listless and unhasteful as they carried the machines to a secluded siding for

the reloading. But I was puzzled to find that when they began packing the aeroplane sections on the small trucks they showed keenness, and even enthusiasm. In the distance we could see them grouped around each truck in turn, as they worked steadily throughout the morning.

"You always as keen in handling Hun war material?" asked H. of a burly Londoner of the old Regulars, who strolled towards us from the siding.

"Sometimes we are, sir; sometimes we ain't."

"You couldn't have done a better morning's work in a munitions factory at home."

"That's right. We done a good mornin's work."

"But, damn it, man, these are *Hun* aeroplanes. What the——"

"As *you* remark, sir, they're 'Un aererplanes. But I doubt if they'll ever fly."

Then we guessed. The soldier amplified the guesses with details.

"Yus; we do er bit uv wreckin'—sabbertage, as yer might say. We carry packages across to that 'ere sidin', and nobody can say as we don't bee'ave bee'yewtiful till we get there. Then we open a box er two, see what's inside, and proceed accordin' ter regulations. Crimernul, I call it. . . . That 'ere sidin's a useful place. Aht uv the way, yer know. The Boches don't go there. 'Course, if any Boches 'er near, we resoom legitimate operations till they've 'opped it. Turks? we don't let 'em see neither if we can 'elp it. Once or twice Turkish *askas* 've seen

us at play, but they only laugh. They 'ate the 'Uns a blurry sight more'n we do. Why, I remember when a coupler Turks *'elped* in the good work one mornin'.

"Guns and aererplanes is 'andiest," he continued reflectively. "Yer see, when we 'ave the breech-block uv a gun it don't need long to take aht some gadget or other, accordin' as the gunners with us sez. Aererplanes we attack mostly on the longeerongs—those ribs uv wood that runs dahn the length uv the body, ain't they? English pilot 'oo passed dahn the line some months ergo giv' us the tip. 'Course, we give the other parts a bit uv attention—wires and sechlike. . . . No, it don't seem likely as those things over there'll fly fer a long time."

It certainly didn't seem likely. Besides ripping open the fuselage fabric and cutting through some of the longerons, the Tommies had hacked at struts and clipped various bracing wires. They had prised open the wooden cases, and, before replacing the covers, had snapped spars, bent elevators and rudders, and been generally unpleasant to the planes. This kind of wrecking was likewise being done, in greater or lesser degree, at Belamedik and other points on the railway where prisoners were forced to work.

The ill-treatment of these six aeroplanes at Bosanti had a peculiar sequel. When the British entered Nazareth (the Turco-German headquarters in Palestine) during General Allenby's final advance, they captured many of the staff documents. Among the aviation papers was a

letter from the O.C. German Flying Corps on that front to Air Headquarters in Germany, complaining bitterly about the bad packing and the bad handling in transit of aeroplanes sent to Palestine. As an instance it mentioned these very six machines (my comparison of dates and details established that point)—single-seater scouts of the Fals type—and declared that not one of them was fit to be assembled for flying. Enclosed was a photograph of some queer-looking débris that had once been a wing. The protest concluded with a request that the men who packed these six craft should be severely punished.

Germans are Germans, but Justice is Justice; and with memories of what I saw at Bosanti, I hope that the packers were not punished.

Having waved good-bye to these Kut-el-Amara survivors, who though prisoners were helping the British armies so effectively, we passed on towards Konia. And even as we moved westward from Bosanti the Aeroplanes That Never Would Fly moved eastward, through the Taurus tunnel that never would be a link in a great chain of railways from Berlin to Bagdad.

CHAPTER VII.

CUTHBERT, ALFONSO, AND A MUD VILLAGE.

IF, at midnight, you were comfortably asleep in a railway carriage, and some Turkish guards dragged you out of it and led you along a puddled track to a mud village in the most God-forsaken part of Anatolia, while the skies rained their damnedest on you and your one spare shirt, you might be annoyed. Possibly you would cry, "To hell with the Turks!"

Such, at any rate, was H.'s comment, shouted at intervals every few seconds, while we watched the train move Constantinoplewards, leaving us at a small village called Alukeeshla.

Cuthbert and Alfonso (as we named the two soldiers who brought us from Bosanti) had told us we were going to Afion-Kara-Hissar. So we went to Alukeeshla. Being unable to read or write, they had failed to notice that the composite ticket given them for seven prisoners and two guards was valid only as far as this village. Their surprise was as great as ours when the conductor turned the whole party out of the train. Certainly, said he, while reading a paper produced by Cuthbert, we were bound for Afion-

Kara-Hissar; but, according to these written instructions, there was to be an indefinite halt at Alukeeshla.

Cuthbert awoke the sleepers, and began throwing luggage on to the platform. In his flurry he dropped a kit-bag on W.'s badly-wounded arm. The sight of W. in pain, following upon our many discomforts and annoyances, sent H. berserk. "To hell with the Turks!" he yelled, then stepped one pace backward, swung a long leg, and shot his size-eleven foot at Cuthbert. The kick lifted the greasy little guard from the floor, and sent him hurtling through the door of the compartment, outside of which he fell on all-fours.

Far from showing resentment, he was obviously cowed. Having picked himself up he asked us, humbly enough, to leave the train. Not wishing to make a bad situation worse by inviting violence, we complied, while trying to soothe H., who continued to consign all Turks to perdition. Evidently Cuthbert and Alfonso thought they had to deal with a madman, and kept out of his way.

Nobody in Alukeeshla had heard of our existence. No quarters, of course, had been allotted. The wretchedness of our midnight search in a mud village for somewhere to rest was so complete as to be humorous; and as we trudged through the rain and the darkness, and fell into the deep puddles that filled every hole in the narrow badly-kept street, we laughed from sheer misery, so that the guards must have thought we were now all mad.

We disturbed the inmates of four hovels before finding the two-roomed building that served as gendarmerie headquarters. Clearly the policeman whom Cuthbert then roused from his sleep on the floor of the front room disliked us, and above all disliked going out into the night. After grumbling and protesting for five minutes, he lit a lantern, scowled his ugliest, and led the party through more puddles to a barn. With many a creak the door of it was unlocked by a rusty key.

Three sorry scarecrows rose up and blinked at the lantern, then sank down again resignedly. The atmosphere was indescribably musty and dusty. Revolting garbage of every species covered the earthen floor. The wooden walls were clotted with dirt. Something with wings could be heard flitting about, near the high roof. The three prostrate scarecrows were disgusting, not because of their rags and their filth, but because of their general suggestion of bestiality.

"The prison," announced the gendarme grandiloquently, as he waved his hand and moved towards the door.

Now Cuthbert and Alfonso shared our indignation at the dumping of British officers into such a place, for it would be their duty to stay with the said officers. They protested volubly; but the gendarme shrugged his shoulders, and replied not a word as he half-opened the door. Thereupon H., still far from calm, grabbed his shoulder, spun him backward, and began explaining the situation in lurid Australian.

An inspiration was given me by the sight of W.'s bald head. W., although a second-lieutenant, was a very old man—in the neighbourhood of forty, I believe. He looked venerable enough to be a temperance lecturer, although as a matter of fact he was a first-rate fellow. Knowing the Turkish reverence for the higher military ranks, I pointed to the bald patch on his head and said, "*Kaimakam!*" (Lieutenant-Colonel), then indicated the unpleasant surroundings, as if in protest against the indignity of putting a colonel in such a place.

The policeman, already in fear of H.'s violence, was obviously of opinion that a *kaimakam*, even an English one, should have better quarters. With a "*haidee git!*" to the guards, he led us back into the rain, and so to the gendarmerie. There he awoke the police officer, and explained our presence. Fortunately the officer was too drowsy to read our papers for proof of the presence of a *kaimakam*. Finally, at his orders, the gendarme took us to a room on the first floor of a two-storey mud building. It was dirty and utterly bare; but there, at any rate, we had privacy. We laid out claims to floor-space and fell asleep, while Alfonso remained on guard by the door.

That little room in a mud hut was the home for ten days of seven British officers and two Turkish guards. Side by side, and with bodies touching each other, there was just space enough for eight people to lie on the floor. Already, when we arrived, one could sense the presence of Cuthbert and Alfonso without seeing or hear-

ing them; and with each washless day their natural odour became more and more intensive.

We had nothing to read, and—worst misfortune of all—somebody had left our pack of playing-cards in the train. We wandered round the walls like beasts in a cage.

Nobody in the village knew or cared why we were there, or what was to happen to us. We could only surmise that this was the punishment for the plot to escape from Damascus.

Cuthbert took our papers into the village on the morning after arrival, but returned at midday, with no information and many shoulder-shrugs. Although none of us knew Turkish, we understood enough to realise that if the matter of obtaining instructions were left to this stupid illiterate, we might stay in the village for ever.

A council of war decided that I, as being the linguist, and W., as being the most imposing of us, with his bald head, his bushy moustache, and his South African ribbons, should drag Cuthbert into the presence of whatever officials we could find, and make ourselves a pluperfect nuisance until we were sent away.

"Commandant!" I said, going towards the door, this word being common to most languages.

"*Yassak!*" said Cuthbert, barring the way.

"Commandant! Come!" I insisted, brushing him aside.

He was ready to yell for help, when Alfonso came forward as an unexpected ally, and persuaded Cuthbert that it would be better to let us try to clear up the situation. He led us to the station, where, with a French-speaking

Armenian in tow as interpreter, we forced our way into the military commandant's office.

The commandant—a slight dapper *bimbashi*—claimed to be desolated at our unfortunate position. But what could he do? he inquired. Only yesterday he had not heard of our existence, and then — clack! — we arrived without warning in this Anatolian village. Doubtless, if we waited a week or so, the authorities would send orders for a transfer to some prison camp. Meanwhile he would gladly help us in any way possible, except give us food or allow us to take walks or move us into a better house, or, in fact, do anything that I suggested. Twenty minutes of argument and bluster were necessary before W. and I could even induce the soft-spoken hypocrite to telegraph to Bosanti for instructions about our disposal.

Next day, when I took Cuthbert to the station for news, no reply had come. Nor was there any message on the third morning. Ten o'clock of the morning became known as "commandant time," so that on the fourth day the guards took the visit as a matter of course, Cuthbert showing his watch by way of reminder. The *bimbashi*, worried by our importunities, took to dodging from his office when he saw us coming; but always we waited until he returned, and talked insistently until he promised to send yet another telegram. He showed surface politeness, and never uttered threats; which in any case would have been more or less futile, for the fighting force of the village comprised but one police lieutenant and four gendarmes.

We had arrived hungry, and we continued hungry. The law of supply and demand as applied to eggs, together with the local brand of profiteer, was the cause. On the first morning a bearded peasant visited the hut with a basket of hard-boiled eggs, which he sold at the current rate of two and a half piastres each. Next day, when it became known in the village that the prisoners were buying eggs, the rate was four piastres each. Afterwards it leaped to five, and next to seven and a half piastres. Finally the supply of eggs all but gave out. It was then possible to buy only one apiece every morning; whereat we became more hungry than ever, for eggs were our mainstay.

The commandant had given reluctant permission for each prisoner to buy one small loaf of bread a day, at the military rate of two and a half piastres a loaf. For the rest, we managed to supplement the bread and eggs with an occasional supply of figs or raisins, bought in the village bazaar as I returned from my importuning of the military commandant.

These fruits were shown in open baskets on crazy little stalls, side by side with stale bread, bad sausages and meat, nuts, cotton materials, primitive haberdashery, rock-salt, rank butter, dusty milk, and the thousand and one other articles that jostle each other in the village bazaars of Anatolia. It being summer, myriads of flies buzzed around and settled on the dried fruits. The figs and raisins, therefore, could not be eaten unless washed carefully or boiled. Fortunately we had a good cooking-pot, given by the soldiers at Bosanti; and a ruffian who

lived' below sold us charcoal, at the rate of ten piastres for a quantity just sufficient to burn for half an hour.

At its best, the crowded room was so stuffy as to be oppressive. When charcoal fumes were added to the summer closeness the atmosphere became unbearable. Another drawback that prevented much cooking was the scarcity of water. We were given just enough to drink; but any surplus, for washing or boiling purposes, had to be bought. Usually one bottle of water sufficed for the morning toilet of two of us. Cuthbert and Alfonso remained unworried by the shortage. They never washed.

Nerve-edging irritation will ever link itself to an enforced companionship from which there is no escape, however temporary; and when repulsive surroundings are the milieu, such irritation is akin to madness. The reek, the vermin, the heat, the hunger, the confined space, the dirt and the depression combined to stab our sensibilities, so that by the third day we almost hated each other, individually and collectively.

We could obtain no brush, no soap, no broom. The little den grew dirtier and dirtier, the floor became more and more littered, the guards were smellier and smellier. Cramped and intensely ennuied, we paced in criss-cross fashion around the twelve square yards of floor-space, getting in each other's way and brooding bitterly. Of outdoor exercise there was only the daily visit to the commandant; and but one other man was allowed to walk to the station with me each morning.

A word, a suggestion, or a nudge was enough to provoke disputes. Every now and then heated

words only stopped short of blows, because all realised that the anger had been sired, not by bad feeling, but by disgusting circumstances, and that a fight would be utterly futile. Worst of all, as most prisoners in Turkey must have realised, was the galling subjection to men such as Cuthbert and Alfonso — semi-civilised, altogether unintelligent, and regulating their actions by the crudest of instincts and axioms.

Only one of us—old W.—remained reasonable; and he would have had the greatest cause for irritation. His wounded arm, which had not received proper treatment in the Turkish hospital at Nazareth, became badly inflamed as a result of the terrible conditions. Yet he never complained, nor did he take part in the constant quarrels. Looking back, I can realise that his fine example was the sole redeeming feature of those miserable days in the mud village.

Always it rained. How it rained! The yard below our window was oozy with mud, so that the veiled women who were our neighbours lifted their robes high as they buried their thick ankles into the slush. Three of them, with an old man, a boy, and three infants, lived in a two-roomed hovel that faced our building. Other dwellers in their hut were a donkey, a dog, and several hens. Two of the women took ostentatious care to draw their *yashmaks* closer whenever a prisoner showed himself at the window; but the third, rather less unprepossessing than the others, was not so careful to hide her face. Beyond the yard was a stretch of flat mud, dotted with squat, ugly buildings.

It was an Australian—I forget which one—who discovered by accident an antidote for the state of unutterable boredom and depression that was overwhelming us. He had lived in the district which for a time was the hunting-ground of the Kelly gang, and he retold the vivid melodrama, as told to him by older people who had been spectators, of the bushranger brothers who wore armour and robbed so successfully, daringly, and incredibly. By the time we had listened, thrilled by wonder, to the tale of the Kellys' last stand against a large force of police, with a burning house as background, what would have been another miserable evening had passed in tense interest.

Afterwards we made full use of this means to forgetfulness. Each afternoon and evening somebody delivered himself of *choses vues* or *choses entendues*. H. told of his wanderings in Fiji, R. of sheep-farming in Queensland, I was able to relate a few early-war observations on the Swiss-German frontier in connection with German espionage. Old W. possessed both the Queen's and King's South African decorations, and for many years after the war in which he gained them had served in the Cape Mounted Rifles. His yarns of diamond-field days before Kimberley was made respectable by the De Beers monopoly, of Mafeking and the Vaal, of the Boer tribal treks and of early Rhodesia, filled many an empty hour in the hut at Alukeeshla.

When pre-1914 reminiscences ran dry, most phases of the war were described from personal experience. M. and H. had fought on Gallipoli

as troopers; R. had flown in the Sinai Desert campaign; W. was at Ypres and Neuve Chapelle in 1915; I had flown over the Somme battles in the days before the Royal Flying Corps had been provided with machines designed for warfare, instead of for inherent stability coupled with inherent unsuitability for fighting Fokkers, Halberstadts, and Rolands on equal terms.

Even Alfonso contributed to the time-killing narratives. We were discussing the war's origin, and somebody mentioned Sarajevo. "*Ya, Sarajevo!*" he said, pointing to his chest, and plunged into a whirlpool of unintelligible talk. He knew a few German words, but mostly he spoke in Turkish or in what was either Serbian or some Bosnian dialect. I failed to gather whether he said he was a native of Bosnia or had merely lived there. It was clear, however, that he had been at Sarajevo when the Archduke Franz Ferdinand was murdered, and had seen the deed. Alfonso's excited description, containing here and there a word I could understand, reminded me, incongruously enough, of Marinetti's Futurist verse, which I had heard recited by the poet himself at a London night club in 1913. Said Alfonso:—

"Kronprinz—jabber jabber jabber—Sarajevo—
Jabber jabber jabber—automobil—
Jabber *—Pouf! pouf! pouf! pouf! pouf! pouf!—
Kronprinz automobil halt boum!—
Jabber jabber jabber—Kronprinz aa-ee—
Damen aa-ee! aa-ee!—jabber jabber—aa-ee!
Jabber jabber jabber jabber jabber jabber."

* Lifting his arm as if aiming with a revolver.

We passed a vote of thanks to Alfonso, together with a cigarette and a fig.

The departure from the mud village was as absurd as the rest of our experiences in it. On my ninth visit to him the commandant announced with pride that he had arranged for our departure by the evening train, and that the station-master at Bosanti would leave an empty truck for us.

Twenty minutes before the train arrived we trudged through the rain to the station, carrying our parcels of disreputable kit. All three gates leading to the platform were guarded by sentries, who offered to bayonet all who tried to pass without papers stamped by the local gendarmerie. To each sentry in turn Cuthbert explained frantically who we were, and what the commandant had said, only to be met with an invariable "*Yassak!*" and a fingering of the rifle.

The *bimbashi* himself was absent, and so was the Armenian interpreter—the only other person, apparently, who knew our orders. Alfonso, despatched to the commandant's house, returned with the news that he could not be found. We stood in the rain, puffing at damp cigarettes and cursing. H. resumed his old refrain, "To hell with the Turks!"—to the wonder of the tatterdemalion men and boys gathered round us.

When the train steamed away from Alukeeshla, taking, no doubt, the empty truck reserved for us, we startled the guards and sentries with yells of uncontrollable laughter.

M. and I opened next morning's visit to the

bimbashi with bitter protests, but had to accept helplessly his suave lies. He had given strict orders that the sentries were to let us pass, he pretended, and they would be punished severely for their failure to do so. Meanwhile, he was charmed that we were to accept the hospitality of the village for one day longer. He himself would be present to see us off by the next train that same evening.

For once in a while the commandant kept his promise. He led us to the station himself. But this time no accommodation had been provided for us on the train. The trucks were full of Germans, the first and second class carriages of Turkish officers, the third-class carriages of Turkish soldiers. As it would be difficult to crowd the Turkish officers, and impossible to dislodge any Germans, the only alternative was to clear out some of the Turkish privates.

The *bimbashi* selected a carriage, entered it, and ordered its occupants to descend to the platform. There were only nine of us, with the guards, while the soldiers numbered more than forty. Yet the *bimbashi* turned them all out. He hurled their packs through the open windows, and by candlelight drove them before him to the doorway. Some, who were reluctant to leave, he struck. It was astonishing to see the little man smacking and kicking burly brutes twice his size; though he knew well that they would never dare to hit back.

When the carriage was quite empty he took us inside and placed us in a corner. The Turkish rabble, swearing and grumbling, then returned

with their packs and their rifles, and scowled at us as they packed themselves into the remaining seats. The whole matter could have been arranged, with a twentieth of the fuss, by merely moving nine Turks from one end of the carriage to the other.

"Good?" asked the commandant proudly after we were seated.

"Magnificent!" I replied, while we tried hard not to let our self-control be blown over by gusts of laughter.

"Then *au revoir*, my friend."

"Adieu, mister the commandant."

He strutted down the platform; and we passed from Alukeeshla to whatever weird experiences might be waiting for us elsewhere.

. . . . . .

This chapter is but an amplification of an inscription signed by H. and myself before we left our mud home. When passing towards Alukeeshla from the station, take the second turning to the right beyond the gendarmerie, then the first to the left, and pick out the fifth house in a row of buildings that stare at you from the bottom of a blind alley. Enter it and climb some rickety stairs to the back room on the first floor, overlooking a yard, and you may still find these words on one of the walls—

"In memory of some bad days and good yarns, spent and told in this dirty room of this verminous hut in this God-forsaken village. To hell with the Turks!"

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE BLACK ROCK.

MOORED under a willow-tree, we were clearing what was left of the cold chicken and salad from the middle of a punt. I filled the Chambertin bottle with water and dropped it overboard. It plashed, and sank noiselessly to the bottom of the Thames. From beyond the island came the metallic strains of a gramophone, made less blatant by the soft atmosphere of the river. A passing punt-pole clacked, rose from the surface, stabbed the water and clacked again. Flies danced from the hot sunlight into the shade of the willow, and hovered over the remains of our lunch. I composed the cushions and lay down, opposite Phyllis.

But the cushions became harder and harder, and the breeze merged gradually into a stuffy, dank oppressiveness. I opened my eyes and sat up. The head-cushion, it appeared, was a sackful of kit, my white flannels were a uniform in creased and dirtied khaki. Phyllis was Alfonso the Turkish guard, and the Thames the military baths at Afion-Kara-Hissar, in the centre of Anatolia.

Some Turks arrived through the stone passage that led to the hot room, and began undressing. Cuthbert was talking to the bath attendant, while Alfonso lay opposite me and snored. H. and W. also snored, in dissonant notes. R. was sorting out his kit. The rest of the party were stretched out in twisted attitudes on the stone floor.

Then I remembered how that we were dragged from the train in the early hours of the morning, and had wandered through the streets of Afion-Kara-Hissar, looking for the prison camp. Finding it closed to night arrivals, Cuthbert and Alfonso led us to the Madrissah *hammam*, in the courtyard of a mosque. Weary with want of sleep and the hardships of a long journey, we had slept for several hours on the floor of the outer bathroom.

Only R. risked taking off his boots; and these had evidently disappeared, for as he searched his loud curses echoed from the domed roof. As was to be expected, all the Turks in the room disclaimed volubly any knowledge of the missing boots; so that when we moved to the prisoners' camp R. clattered along the streets in a pair of wooden sandals borrowed from the bath attendant.

A Turkish officer took charge of us at the barrier which divided the street of prison-houses from the rest of the town. Soon afterwards Cuthbert and Alfonso waved a good-humoured farewell and disappeared. With them they took our cooking pots, although we failed to discover this fact until later in the day. By that time

they had left Afion-Kara-Hissar. We swore long and loud at the memory of the two guards, for in those days any sort of a cooking utensil was in Turkey worth at least two pounds.

Passing up the narrow street we met groups of weirdly-clothed Britishers. Some wore torn and creased uniforms, with a civilian cap or a much-dented billycock; some combined a military hat with ill-fitting suits of shoddy mufti; some were in khaki shorts, surmounted by shirts of violent colours, open at the neck; some wore heavy boots, some wore bedroom slippers, some wore sandals. If the costumes resembled anything at all, it was the illustrations of Murger's *Vie de Bohême.*

Many of these prisoners were survivors of the Kut-el-Amara garrison, and had been prisoners for two and a half years. Their uniforms had long since become scarecrow relics of better days, since when they had depended for clothing on the supplies forwarded by the Dutch Legation at Constantinople. The productions of the Turkish tailors and shirtmakers, as issued to the prisoners at Afion, were entertaining but anarchic.

Afion-Kara-Hissar contained the largest prison camp in Turkey, although there were others at Yozgad, Broussa, and Geddós; the last named being for the fifty or sixty of His Majesty's officers who had been persuaded to give parole not to attempt an escape. When the first batch of British officers arrived at Afion, the Turks turned some Armenian families out of their homes, confiscated the furniture, and told the

captives from the Dardanelles and Mesopotamia that they were to live in the empty houses.

"Beds? Furniture?" said the commandant. "We have none, and it is impossible to supply any."

"Food?" he said in reply to another demand; "it is well known that all British officers are rich. You have money enough to buy food for yourselves."

And so it had to be. At first the British officers lived on their pay as captives; which, according to rank, was at the rate of seven to ten Turkish pounds a month. But food prices soon expanded to extraordinary proportions, while the exchange value of the Turkish pound continued to decrease. By the beginning of 1918 it was worth less than ten shillings; while sugar, for example, was fifteen shillings a pound. Tea was ten pounds sterling a pound, and real coffee was unobtainable. Under these conditions it became almost impossible to obtain even a bare subsistence on seven Turkish pounds a month without outside help. The Dutch Legation, therefore, supplemented each captive officer's pay to the extent of first five, then fifteen Turkish pounds a month, taken from the Red Cross funds at its disposal.

Even thus the food difficulties could not have been solved without the help of parcels from home. These arrived either seven or eight months after they left England, or never. Many were delivered only after the Turks had looted the scarcest articles, such as boots, clothes, and good tobacco.

The lack of furniture was overcome by amateur

carpentry. With string, nails, and planks of wood, each newly-arrived prisoner constructed a bed, a table, and a chair. Profiteers in the bazaar naturally took advantage of the demand for wood, and by the time of which I write the price of it had soared to two Turkish pounds a plank.

Besides the officers there were at Afion about two hundred Tommies, shut up in a Greek church. Their daily rations from the Turks were one small loaf of bad bread and one basin of thin soup. For the rest, they existed on the tinned food which they received from time to time in parcels. As for the Russian soldiers who were herded into the Madrissah buildings, they were really starving. Most of them had sold part of their clothing to buy extra food. Weak and ragged, they passed the time in walking round and round the courtyard. During the bitter months of winter scores of them died from hunger and cold.

Conditions in the prison camps varied according to the character of whomever happened to be the Turkish commandant. For a time the officer in charge was one Muslum Bey, who was reported to have committed several "executions" for Enver Pasha during the Young Turk *coup d'état* of 1908. He was a brute, a swindler, and a degenerate, and during his reign unspeakable outrages were committed. He himself gave a Russian officer who had committed some minor offence more than a hundred strokes of the bastinado. When his arm was tired he made his sergeant-major continue the flogging, until the Russian fainted. The victim's unconscious body

was then thrown into a cellar, where a part of his face was burned by contact with quicklime.

It was not until the visit of a Swiss Commission, investigating the prison camps of Turkey, that the British officers at Afion-Kara-Hissar heard of Muslum Bey's worst outrage. The commandant had taken great care that there should be no communication between the captive officers and the captive men, and severe punishment was inflicted if a Tommy tried to speak with a British officer in the street. Scenting something wrong, the officers persuaded members of the Swiss Commission to take with them the senior British doctor when they visited the Tommies in the Greek church. Almost the first words that Colonel B., the doctor in question, heard on entering the building were the equivalent of "I've been violated, sir." He then learned the story of how two British soldiers, thrown into jail for some trivial offence, had been outraged, first by the commandant and then by his sergeant-major.

The Swiss Commission itself was not immune. An Australian officer took a member of it aside and told him the full story of the awful death-march from Kut-el-Amara, in which the captured garrison, already reduced by hunger, were forced to trek over 800 miles of desert and mountain, being left to die in the scorching sun if they fell out owing to weakness—a death-march which is responsible for the fact that less than 25 per cent of the men captured at Kut-el-Amara are alive to-day.

"Yes, we know all about it," said the Swiss,

"and we had it in our notes. But most of our papers were stolen the other day."

When I reached Afion, in May 1918, the conditions had improved. As a result of a secret report by the senior British officer, smuggled to the headquarters at Constantinople of the Ottoman Red Crescent, Muslum Bey had been removed from his position and imprisoned. He was put on trial for his many crimes; but owing to *baksheesh* and to political protection the sentence was but a few months' imprisonment. He had already served this period while awaiting trial, and was therefore released immediately after sentence. He went into business as a shopkeeper, and sold, among other things, tinned food bearing British labels—tinned food of the kind that anxious people in England and India lovingly bought and lovingly packed for their husbands, sons, and relatives who were prisoners of war.

Meanwhile, although Muslum Bey had been given only the travesty of a punishment by the Turkish judges, instructions were sent from the Turkish War Office that life at the prison camps of Afion-Kara-Hissar must be made more pleasant. We were, for example, allowed the run of a portion of the hillside. In cold print such a concession seems unimportant enough; but to men who had become staled and unspeakably bored by months of captivity, during which their only exercise was to walk up and down a narrow street, it was a godsend. Cricket and football matches were also allowed, and two or three times a week long walks were arranged.

Members of these walking parties would study the flat plain that surrounded Afion-Kara-Hissar and the succession of hill-ranges beyond it, and dream of an escape to some point on the coast.

From this town in the centre of Anatolia, however, escape seemed an impossibility. The nearest point of the coast was 150 miles distant; and the intervening country, much of it wild and almost trackless, was full of brigands and starving outlaws of every description, who would cheerfully kill a chance traveller for a pair of boots, a loaf of bread, or merely for practice. In any case, a tramp to the coast must extend over at least five weeks, and it was difficult to see how food for this long period could be taken.

Several officers carried on a secret correspondence with friends in England by means of code, and tried to prepare schemes whereby a boat was to be waiting for them at some specified part of the coast-line between specified dates, or whereby an aeroplane was to pick them up during the night. Most of us gave up the idea of making a dash for freedom from Afion, and schemed to be sent to Constantinople, where the chances of success would be greater.

When a recently-captured prisoner first accepted the fact that escape from Afion-Kara-Hissar was impossible, and when the monotony of captivity had permeated him, he would as a rule pass through a period of melancholy and the deepest depression. A black rock—huge, gaunt, and forbidding—overshadowed the little town from its height of 2000 feet of almost sheer

precipice. For hours at a time one would stare at its bare blackness, and at the crumbling ruins of the fortress, built by the Seljak Turks, which topped the rock; and the blackness and bareness would enter into one's soul and plunge one into a swirling vortex of morbid thoughts. For me the rock was a symbol of captivity—bleak, inexorable, and unrelenting.

Yet as a rule the period of melancholy soon passed, and gave place to resigned acceptance of the trivial and monotonous daily round of prison life. This view of things was made possible by improvised distractions, by reading, and by the discussion of the thousand and one rumours that spread from the bazaars. Time and again it would be whispered by some Greek trader that Talaat Pasha was negotiating a separate peace and had agreed to open the Dardanelles, or that war was about to be declared between Turkey and Bulgaria as a result of the Dobrudja dispute, or that Enver Pasha had been assassinated, or that the Sultan was determined to rid himself of the Young Turk government. We knew well that these reports were untrue and scarce worth even the attention of bitter laughter; but, since we wanted them to be true, they would be discussed with gravity over the mess-tables, until the next batch of newspapers proved their falsity.

The most useful means to forgetfulness was the camp library. Many hundreds of books were sent to the prison camps of Turkey by various societies and individual sympathisers in England. In case this chapter should meet the notice of

any of these our benefactors, I wish to put on record their great help in making bearable the dark days of thousands of prisoners. It was at Afion-Kara-Hissar that I first found the courage and concentration necessary to read through each and every consecutive volume of Gibbon. 'The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,' by the way, was probably more in demand than anything else in the library; for the state of mind induced by captivity needed something more solid and satisfying than the best yeller-seller. Great favourites, too, were books of Eastern travel and adventure—in particular the works of Burton and Lamartine, the 'Travels of Marco Polo the Venetian,' and Morier's 'Hajji Baba.' A copy of Plutarch's 'Lives' also received the attention of much wear and tear. For the rest, many a time have I thanked the gods for Kipling; but never more heartily than when lying on the hillside at Afion and forgetting the Black Rock and all that it stood for in the company of Kim the lovable, Lalun the lovely, and The Man Who Would Be King.

Away from the ragtime blare and rush of modern life this isolation in a small town of a semi-civilised province gave the prisoners time and opportunity to "find" themselves, so that for the first time in their lives many began to think individually, instead of accepting conventional opinions at second-hand. At least one book of promise was written at Afion-Kara-Hissar, and four others have found publication. Several excellent poems were born there, amid a welter of verse that was deathless because

lifeless. Plays, paintings, and songs were produced in profusion. One man, an Australian, made a very thorough study of the ancient civilisation of the Middle East, and could supply accurate information, without reference to a book, about every phase of the rise and fall of Babylon and Nineveh, of the Medes and Persians, of the Chaldeans and Assyrians, with the extent and location and customs and conquests of the various empires. Yet he confessed that three years earlier, at a time when he was flying in Mesopotamia, he had no more interest in Babylon than in Nashville, Tennessee.

Apart, however, from the quality of this work *pour passer le temps*, the very fact that so many should adventure into the country of creative effort proved that, when away from the preoccupations of an artificial social system, even the average Englishman turned instinctively to learning or the arts.

Meanwhile, many a lively performance was given in the garden, which served as open-air theatre, with plays written and songs composed by people who, before being subjected to the isolation of captivity, had occupied themselves solely with soldiering or business. Comic relief was provided by two youthful subalterns who set up shop as earnest-minded philosophers, and, on a foundation of Nietzsche, Wilde and Shaw, built a gargoyled edifice that was perverted and extravagantly young, but vastly entertaining.

The social life of the camp was complex. Despite the absence of the female of the species,

it resembled in many ways that of a suburb in some wealthy city of the Midlands. As was to be expected among a hundred people confined in two small streets, innumerable cliques were formed, from each of which ripples of gossip spread outward until they merged into and were overwhelmed by another ripple of gossip. Starting in the morning from a small room in a wooden house, an item of scandal would by the evening have reached every room of thirty other houses — how that X. had received a pair of pyjamas for nothing from the Red Cross supply and sold them for three liras; how that Y. had climbed over several roofs at night-time and, in the shadow of a chimney, met that Armenian girl with the large eyes; how that Z. had experimented with opium-smoking. Opium, by the way, could be had in plenty. The production of it was the chief industry of Afion-Kara-Hissar (*afion* is Turkish for "poppy," *kara hissar* being "black rock"). Enormous poppy-fields surrounded the town, in vivid splashes of red and white.

Yet with all the trivial gossip and light scandal there was a very real sense of comradeship. If any man were sick, the remainder would fall over each other in their desire to be of help. If any house were short of wood during the bitter months of winter, its inmates could always borrow from such as had enough and to spare. A new prisoner, possessing no money and a minimum of clothes — as was the case with most of us — would be overwhelmed by loans and gifts.

When I was at Afion the camp was very much preoccupied with rumours of a forthcoming exchange of sick prisoners between Great Britain and Turkey. Scores of intrigues centred round the room of Major H., then senior medical officer among the British; for it would be his task to examine the "unfit" before deciding which were to be sent for further and final examinations by Turkish medical boards. Scarcely a man failed to produce some ailment. Wounds that had healed years before were bandaged and treated with unnecessary care. Limps of every description might be seen in the street. Some claimed to be deaf. Others allowed their grey hairs to grow long, and continued to express an opinion that the old and feeble should be sent home first. Such as could produce neither old age nor some physical ailment discussed loss of memory and mental trouble.

All day long Major H. examined the claimants, smiled to himself, and compiled lists. These, I imagine, must have been subdivided something like this: (*a*) Those who suffered from real injuries or illnesses; (*b*) those who were middle-aged and had minor ailments; (*c*) those who were young and had minor ailments; (*d*) those who might conceivably have minor ailments but could supply no visible symptoms; (*e*) those who had nothing the matter with them, but were good liars, and as such might convince the Turks; (*f*) those who were not only healthy, but unconvincing liars.

Besides the British there were at Afion about

a hundred Russian officers; for although the peace of Brest-Litovsk had been signed and Russia was at peace with Germany, the Russian was the traditional enemy of the Turk, and none knew when war might break out between Turkey and the small States which had sprung up in the Caucasus. With no money, no Red Cross supplies, no means of communicating with their relatives, and no knowledge of whether these relatives had survived the Bolshevik terror, the Russian officers among us lived miserably, and depended largely upon the charity of British fellow-captives. In return they taught us a smattering of Russian, and helped to pass the time with their interminable but entertaining talk. They also provided a really fine choir. Besides ourselves, its audience, when it sang on the hillside, never failed to include the dark-haired Armenian girls — the only Armenians left in the town — who had been spared from the exodus and massacres of 1915-1916 that they might serve the pleasures of Turkish officers and officials. They listened from a distance, and looked their sympathy, as we looked ours.

At the beginning of each month, when the Red Cross funds arrived from Constantinople, there would be a succession of birthday parties. On these occasions the rule was relaxed whereby each prisoner must remain in his own house after seven o'clock. The Turks reverence birthdays, and by playing upon this fact permission would be obtained to celebrate in a friend's room. It was necessary to claim birthdays in

rotation, for even a Turk might have disbelieved if the same prisoner had three of them in three successive months.

I shall always remember a party given on the evening of my arrival by White, an Australian aviator captured in the early days of the Mesopotamian campaign. It was my first introduction to *árak*, a kind of a tenth-rate absinthe, which, except some incredibly bad brandy, was then the only alcoholic stimulant to be bought in Anatolia. Finding it stronger than it seemed, I had almost forgotten captivity in an unreal enjoyment of the songs, the stories, and the general hilarity — a hilarity which was merely a cloak for forgetfulness. And then, amid the fumes and the shouting, there recurred insistently the thought of escape. I spoke of it to the man nearest me, a short figure in a faded military overcoat, Turkish slippers, and an eyeglass.

"Not so loud," he warned. "You can't trust half these Russians. Come over into the corner."

Yeats-Brown, the speaker, began to suggest advice about how best to escape. One's only chance, he declared, was to get to Constantinople. He himself claimed nose trouble, and having cultivated the friendship of the local Turkish doctor, he was to be sent for treatment to a hospital in the capital. If I could invent some plausible ailment he would persuade the Turkish doctor to use his influence on my behalf. Meanwhile we would have further talks and discuss plans. The great thing was to get to Constantinople.

Although I did not know it at the time, there were in that bare room several men with whom, in a few weeks' time, I was to be involved in a succession of extraordinary intrigues and adventures, when we should have met again in Constantinople. There was the host himself—Captain White—who later on joined me in a thousand-mile journey, through Russia and Bulgaria, to freedom; there was Captain Yeats-Brown, who for weeks went about an enemy capital disguised as a girl; there was Paul, who was to escape three times, be recaptured twice, and finally to marry the English lady who helped him; there was Prince Constantine Avaloff, a Russian colonel, who was to help us all by acting as go-between; there was Lieutenant Vladimir Wilkowsky, a Polish aviator, whom I was to see again on the other side of the Black Sea, in German-occupied Odessa. Meanwhile the *árak* bottle passed round, and the songs grew louder and wilder, until daylight broke up the party and we returned to our rough hand-made beds.

It now became my aim in life to reach Constantinople. My injuries had healed, and at a moment's notice I could produce no convincing illness. I decided, therefore, on some form of mental trouble. Yeats-Brown had already mentioned me to his friend the Turkish doctor, and I was to have been examined, when yet again the unexpected happened. It was ordained by the Ministry of War that the seven of us who left Damascus together should be forwarded to Constantinople, presumably for interrogation.

I took with me high hopes and the addresses

of various civilians in the capital who might be of help. As we entrained, and moved westward through the poppy-fields, the Black Rock—which more than ever seemed a symbol of the blackness and menace that overshadowed prisoners in this half-barbaric country—loomed gigantic and forbidding, so that I was thankful when the railway wound round a hill and shut it from sight. I vowed to myself that never again would I return to the monotonous death-in-life of the prison camp at its foot, on the fringe of the squalid town of Afion-Kara-Hissar.

CHAPTER IX.

CONSTANTINOPLE; AND HOW TO BECOME MAD.

"YOUR best card," said Pappas Effendi, "is *vertige*. Melancholia and loss of memory and nervous breakdown and all that 'll be helpful, but play up *vertige* for all you're worth. It can mean anything. Besides, it's impressive."

Pappas Effendi was a Roman Catholic chaplain, waiting at Psamatia (a suburb of Constantinople) to be exchanged as a sick prisoner of war. He and I were discussing how best I could be admitted to hospital, so as to remain in the capital. My injuries had healed, and I could conjure up no physical disorder at a moment's notice, I decided to claim, therefore, that as a result of the aeroplane crash in Palestine I suffered from nervous and mental troubles.

For the few British officers at Psamatia the accommodation was fair to very fair; but for the soldiers of many nationalities in the same camp, life must have been dreadful. Hundreds of them — Britishers, Indians, Russians, Roumanians, and Serbs—were herded together into filthy crowded outhouses and sheds. They were allowed outside them only twice a day, when

they walked backwards and forwards, forwards and backwards across the yard, by way of exercise. Most of them had done nothing else for months. Their daily rations were the usual loaf of bread and basin of unnourishing soup.

For the Britishers and Indians conditions were not so bad, because they received occasional food parcels from home, and a small monthly remittance from the Red Cross. The Russians, Roumanians, and Serbs had neither money nor parcels. Some died of weakness, some sold half their clothing to buy food, and in consequence died of cold during the bitter winters. The Tommies were also better off in that they were supplied with clothes and boots by the Dutch Legation, which administered the Red Cross funds. Prisoners of other nationalities walked about gaunt and in tatters. The British gave them whatever food and tobacco could be spared on parcel-days, but even so they could often be seen scrambling for a thrown-away stump of cigarette, or for bits of bread or biscuit. Many seemed almost bestial in their hopeless misery. Only the Serbs, stoic as always, maintained a reserved dignity and scorned to beg.

Our threatened interrogation never happened, and one evening it was announced that our party of seven were to return to Afion-Kara-Hissar. From every point of view it would be advisable to remain in Constantinople. I believed it to be the only Turkish town in which one might arrange a successful escape, and I knew that it contained civilians who were either British themselves or willing to help British prisoners. More-

over, it offered many possibilities in the way of distraction, which were always attainable through *baksheesh*, that lowest common denominator of the Turkish Empire. And if the long-promised exchange of sick prisoners took place, Constantinople was obviously the place where strings must be pulled if one wanted to be sent home on the strength of some feigned illness.

There were at Psamatia two officers who had been told that they would be among the first batch of prisoners to leave the country. One of them—Flight-Lieutenant F., captured after losing his way during his first night-raid on active service—claimed to be suffering from some form of tuberculosis, difficult of definition and detection, but strongly supported by influential friends. The other was Father M., a Roman Catholic padre who was among the captured garrison of Kut-el-Amara. It was evident that thirty months of captivity had seriously affected his well-being, mental and physical. In any case, as a non-combatant over military age, the white-haired priest should most certainly have been allowed to leave Turkey. Meanwhile he was well loved by all at Psamatia, even by the guards, who knew him as "Pappas Effendi." Whenever he passed down the street children from among the Catholic Christians who lived near the prison-house would stand in his way and demand a blessing.

Unfortunately there was in the camp library no medical text-book to tell how a prisoner might feign nervous disorders. I had to be content with coaching from Pappas Effendi, and with

practising before the mirror a doleful look, tempered by a variety of twitchings. Then I visited the camp doctor. Ever since my aeroplane smash, I complained with mournful insistence, I had suffered terribly from *vertige*, from periods of utter forgetfulness, from maddening melancholia, and from nervous outbreaks. Above all from *vertige*.

Fortunately the doctor, like most Turkish medical men, was both ignorant and lazy. His day's work was to sit in an office for two hours, always smoking a cigarette through an absurdly long holder, and having listened to the translated statements of would-be patients, either to send them away with a pill or to write out a form whereby they could be examined at a hospital. A wound or an injury he might have treated by pill; but it was plain that the very suggestion of mental trouble stumped him. He could not withstand the word *vertige*, and after a second repetition of it I had no difficulty in procuring a chit ordering me to be dealt with by a hospital doctor.

That same afternoon I was led to Gumuch Souyou Hospital, in Pera. There, my claims to admission as a mentally afflicted person were granted without question, so that I began to wonder whether or not I really was in my right mind. Having heard the list of pretended symptoms, not forgetting the *vertige*, an Armenian doctor sent me to bed for a fortnight's rest.

W., whose wounded arm was badly inflamed, already occupied a bed in the same room, as did Ms., who years before had ricked his right knee.

Now, by reason of its weakness, he managed to stay in hospital, with one eye on the possibilities of an exchange of prisoners. R., who had the same object in view, turned up from Psamatia later in the day. He had shown two perfectly-healed bullet wounds in the leg, received three years earlier in Gallipoli, and had bluffed the Turkish doctor into believing that they were giving him renewed trouble.

Now clearly, if I wished to maintain a reputation for melancholia, nervous fits, and *vertige*, I should have to prove abnormality; and just as clearly it would be difficult to give convincing performances before fellow-prisoners who knew me to be normal. The only solution was to demand removal to a single-bedded room, for the sake of quiet.

"Pulse and heat normal," commented the ward doctor next morning.

"Yes, M. le docteur. For the moment nothing worries me, except that I have forgotten all that has happened since the aeroplane smash. Sometimes my mind is a black blank, sometimes I am unconscious of what I do, sometimes the *vertige* is so bad that I cannot stand on my feet. Above all, I hate being near anybody. I desire complete rest. Will you be so kind as to let me go to a small room where I can remain alone?"

The doctor was only half-convinced; but he gave instructions for the change, while W. turned over suddenly to hide his face, and covered his head with a blanket, so as not to laugh aloud.

Once again, as I lay in bed and racked my common-sense for ideas on the subject of nervous

fits and *vertige*, I deplored the lack of any kind of medical text-book; for never before had I suffered from mental derangement.

"Pulse and heart normal," the doctor said inexorably, on the following morning.

Then, some hours later, the conduct of Ibrahim, the fat orderly, suggested the required inspiration. Disregarding instructions not to worry me, he entered the room in the heat of early afternoon, sat down, leaned his head on the table, and began to snore. That really did upset my nerves. Consciously I stimulated the sense of irritation until I was furious with the Turkish orderly. Blending this anger with the need of producing some sort of a fit, I considered how best to attack him, and what attitude to adopt afterwards.

I jumped out of bed, opened the door, seized Ibrahim round the middle, and flung him into the corridor. He yelled with surprise. Next I sat down on the bed and began tearing the sheets into long strips. The corporal of the guard, with another Turkish soldier, half-opened the door cautiously and looked inside. I stared at them blankly, then got into bed and lay down quietly, facing the wall.

Ibrahim returned presently with the doctor of the day, who entered with a surprised and quizzical "*Qu'est-ce qu'il y'a?*"

"Doctor," I said, "I fail to remember what I've been doing during the last five minutes. But I feel I've been through a crisis. Even now my head swims. I suffer from acute *vertige*."

Followed a long explanation in Turkish, with gestures, from Ibrahim. The doctor felt my pulse, which fortunately had accelerated during the calculated excitement of heaving the orderly out of the room.

"*Calmez-vous donc,*" said the doctor. "*Tout sera bien après quelques semaines.*" I liked the suggestion of "some weeks," for anything might happen in that time.

Before leaving me the doctor prescribed some sort of a bromide mixture, with calming qualities. The first performance, I felt, had been rather a success. As for the bromide, I poured it out of the window during the night. The bottle was refilled in the morning.

Next day was a fitless one, and by the evening I felt that something must be done to maintain my reputation. Still knowing little of how a man with my complaints must act, I thought —wrongly, as I discovered later—that somnambulism would fit in with the general scheme of abnormality.

I stayed awake until 2 A.M. Then, wearing a night-shirt, I walked woodenly into the passage, with arms outstretched and head upheld. The guard was dozing on a bench that faced the door. He took not the least notice. Feeling hurt at such disregard, I turned and passed him again, this time taking care to nudge his knee. He rubbed his eyes, shrilled an exclamation, and began running in the opposite direction. When he returned with the sergeant of the guard, a quarter of an hour later, I was in bed and apparently asleep.

During the week that followed I gave several minor performances. Soon, however, I was ousted from my single-bedded blessedness by a more worthy madman. A Turkish soldier passed into a violent delirium, and ran down the corridor on all-fours, calling out that he was a horse. This was far more striking than anything I had imagined or attempted. The delirious Turk was confined apart in my little room, while I shared a ward with four Turkish officers.

I chose melancholia for the first demonstration in the new quarters. All day I stared at the ceiling, and answered questions with a rough "*oui*" or "*non*," without looking at the questioner. Then, at 3 A.M., when the four Turks were asleep, I picked up a medicine bottle, half-filled with bromide mixture, and flung it at the wall. It struck, tinkled, and scattered in fragments; while three of the Turkish officers awoke and sat up in bed.

"Air-raid?" suggested one of them—for at that time British bombers from Mudros were visiting Constantinople on most moonlit nights.

"No, a bottle," said another, switching on a light and pointing to the splintered glass. He proceeded to protest angrily in Turkish, and I caught the words "mad Englishman." He turned off the light, and all lay down again. When the night orderly arrived he found everything quiet, and dared ask no questions, for fear of disturbing the Turkish officers. Next morning the senior officer in the ward protested to the chief doctor against being submitted to disturbances, and possible violence,

from a mentally afflicted Englishman. I was then moved into a large room where were other officer-prisoners.

To sham violence before fellow-Britishers was almost impossible, I found, even though they co-operated in casting dust into Turkish eyes. I modified the fits into starts and twitchings, whenever a sudden noise coincided with the presence of a doctor. The melancholia and loss of memory I retained, for these were easy of accomplishment.

In any case I should have been obliged to become normal enough for walks outside the hospital, if my hopes were to become realities. Staying in Constantinople when the rest of the party had returned to Anatolia was all very well, but it availed nothing unless I could get into touch with people who might help me to plan an escape.

Each Sunday morning such British officers as were not confined to bed attended service at the Crimean Memorial Church, off the Grande Rue de Pera. I wished to make use of this fact in my search for helpers. Besides the clergyman himself there were still a few British civilians free in Constantinople, and most of them visited the church on Sunday mornings. Above all, there would be the chance of asking advice from Miss Whitaker, a very plucky and noble lady who had taken great risks upon herself in helping prisoners. Already she had visited us at Gumuch Souyou, in the company of a Dutch diplomat's wife who came with official sanction.

A fortnight of fairly mild behaviour gained me permission to attend divine service. With guards keeping a yard or so behind us we walked through the Grande Rue de Pera, with its crowd of evident sympathisers, and so to the church at the bottom of a winding side-street. Then, for an hour, I was in England—for all England was suggested by the pretty little building, with its floor smoothly flagged in squares, its simply compact altar, its well-ordered pews, its consciously reverent congregation, its rippling organ, and — yes, by the great truths and dogmatic commonplaces that were platitudinised from its pulpit. The very sermon—dull, undistinguished, and full of the obvious levelness that one hears in any of a thousand small churches on any Sunday—brought joy unspeakable, because of its associations.

The guards, who had been standing at the back of the church, with hat on head, refused to let us remain near the door when the congregation dispersed. It was inadvisable to bribe them in public; so, with a friendly wave from Miss Whitaker and sympathetic looks from unknown British civilians, we left at once. We crossed the Golden Horn to Stamboul, and lunched at our usual restaurant, where I met Pappas Effendi again.

Presently in strolled another old acquaintance—Colonel Prince Constantine Avaloff, the Georgian. He had just arrived at Psamatia from Afion-Kara-Hissar, and brought with him the latest news from that camp — the arrival

of a new commandant who seemed quite pleasant, the success of the latest concert, the delivery of a batch of parcels, the increase in price of *árak*, and other of the small happenings that filled the deadly life of a prisoner of war in Turkey. For me the most interesting item of news was that Captain Tom White was to be sent to a Constantinople hospital. Although he had said nothing about escaping, I rather thought he intended to try it. If he came to Gumuch Souyou he would be a useful companion, for I knew him to be both ingenious and unafraid. Meanwhile I revealed my own hopes to the Prince, who promised to help in any way possible. He was likely to be of use, for as a result of Georgia's submission to Germany, he was now free to move about the city without a guard. I walked back to Pera lightheartedly, with an instinctive knowledge that opportunity was in the offing.

A tousled scarecrow of a man was sitting up in a hitherto empty bed as we entered the prisoners' ward of the hospital. His long untrimmed hair hung over an unwashed neck, his cheeks were sunken, his hands were clasped over the bedclothes that covered his shins. He never looked at us, but with an expression of the most unswerving austerity continued to read a book that lay open on his knees. As I passed I saw, from the ruling and parágraphing of the pages, that it must be a copy of the Bible.

I looked round for enlightenment, only to find myself facing an even stranger figure. In a bed opposite the scarecrow sat a man whose face

was unnaturally white. The young forehead was divided and subdivided by deep wrinkles; a golden beard tufted from the chin; the head was covered by a too-large fez, made of white linen. He grinned and waved an arm towards the Turkish orderly; but when we looked at him he shrank back in apparent affright, then hid under the bedclothes.

"English officers," said the orderly, "Come from Haidar Pasha Hospital. Both mad."

"I am not English," protested in Turkish the strange, befezed head as it shot from under the bedclothes. "I am a good Turk. The English are my enemies. I wrote to His Excellency, Enver Pasha, telling him I wished to become a Turkish officer."

"*Mulazim* Heel," continued the Turk, pointing towards the scarecrow. Then, as he swung his hand in the direction of the man who had written to Enver Pasha, "*Mulazim* Jaw-nēss."

"My name is not Jones," the Fantastick shouted, still speaking in Turkish. "I am Ahmed Hamdi Effendi."

Yet he was indeed Jones, just as much as the scarecrow opposite him was Hill. We had heard stories of their extravagant doings, but this was our first sight of the famous lunatics whose reputation had spread through every prison camp in Turkey. The Turks believed them to be mad; and although there were sceptics, so did many of the British prisoners. When, after watching the pair for several hours, we went into the garden that evening and discussed them, we agreed that they were either real madmen or brilliant actors.

It had all begun months earlier at Yózgad. To pass the weary time, Jones and Hill dabbled in and experimented with hypnotism and telepathy. By making ingenuity and the conjurer's artifice (at which Hill was an expert) adjuncts of their séances, they nonplussed fellow-prisoners and Turks alike; for it was impossible to tell whether trickery or something inexplicable was the basis of their astonishing demonstrations. By means of the Spirit of Music (a hidden lamp with the wick turned too high), the Buried Treasure Guarded by Arms (some coins and an old pistol that were first placed in position and then "revealed" by digging), the Miraculous Photographs (taken with a secret camera designed and constructed by themselves), and other devices, they reduced the camp commandant and his staff to a state of bewildered fear. When they had hoodwinked the commandant into the belief that they could exchange mind-messages with local civilians, he confined them in a small room, and allowed no communication with other prisoners.

From this time onward, moreover, Jones and Hill showed dread of their fellow-prisoners. The British officers at Yózgad wanted to destroy them, they informed the Turkish commandant, adding a plea for protection. Meanwhile their hair and beards grew longer and more untrimmed, their general appearance stranger and wilder. Perhaps their most impressive exploit at Yózgad was when a guard found them hanging side by side on ropes that were suspended from a beam, the chairs that supported their

weight having been kicked away just before he entered the room. He cut down the dangling bodies; and his tale confirmed the commandant in the belief that the spiritualistic prisoners were altogether insane.

A few days later they went under escort to Constantinople, and were admitted to Haidar Pasha Hospital. From this hospital their reputation spread all over Constantinople. Long before they were transferred to Gumuch Souyou I had heard how Hill read the Bible all day, and uttered never a word except when he prayed aloud; and how Jones, having in two months learned to talk Turkish perfectly, proclaimed himself a Turk, and would speak no other language. His name, he insisted time and again, was Ahmed Hamdi Effendi. He disregarded all Britishers in Haidar Pasha Hospital, unless it were to tell the Turkish doctor that Jones was mad, and therefore, as the afflicted of Allah, more to be pitied than blamed.

Once he threw himself into the pond in the garden. Once, having received the usual Red Cross monthly remittance from an official of the Dutch Legation, he tore the bank-notes in two, threw the scraps of paper across the room, and declared that he wanted no English money. During an air-raid over Constantinople he ran into the open and demanded a gun, so that he might shoot down the British aeroplanes.

At about sundown on his first evening with us Hill closed the Bible, stepped out of bed, and knelt down, facing the east. Then, without a pause, he recited prayers in a loud voice for

twenty minutes. Several Turks came in to listen; while Jones, tapping his befezed head, explained to them that the kneeling figure was mad.

Each morning and each evening Hill knelt on the floor and prayed aloud. Sometimes, during the night, he would walk to another bedside, wake up its occupant, and exhort him to prayer. For the rest he spoke never a word other than "Yes" or "No" or "I don't know," in answer to questions. All day he sat in bed, with eyes riveted on the Bible by unswerving concentration, or clasped his head and appeared lost in meditation. When the doctor examined him he paid not the slightest attention; but when an effort was made to take away the Bible, he clutched it desperately, and was evidently ready to use violence. His hair and beard grew longer and more tousled, until he was forcibly shaved; whereupon, with his hollowed cheeks and sunken, glowing eyes, he looked more of a scarecrow than ever.

Jones kept himself quite dapper in his own peculiar fashion. His curly golden beard and moustache seemed to be his especial pride. At first Ms. attempted conversation with him; but as he always turned away and showed fright, we left him alone. Yet twice he sought out the chief doctor, and complained that the British officers wanted to murder him. Being a Turk, he continued, why was he kept in a room with Englishmen, who were his enemies and wanted to hurt him?

Beyond laughing and remarking how sad it was

that our comrade should be so mad, the chief doctor took no notice. Thereupon Ahmed Hamdi Jones sat down and wrote a letter of furious complaint to His Excellency Enver Pasha, Minister of War in the Young Turk government, and incidentally the most ruthless desperado in that all-desperado body the Committee of Union and Progress.

I still remember every detail and movement of an absurd scene. Ms. lay asleep one hot afternoon, with a bare foot protruding through the bars at the bottom of the bed. R. crawled across the floor, intending to crouch beneath Ms.'s bedstead and tickle the sole of his foot with a feather. Jones, whose bed was next to that of Ms., shrank back and made a tentative move towards the door as R. glided nearer. R. looked up casually from his all-fours position and found the lunatic face glaring at him with wide-open, rolling eyes. The pair stared at each other surprisedly for a few seconds; then Ahmed Hamdi Jones yelled, leaped from his bed, and ran out of the room.

If that were acting, we agreed, it was very wonderful acting. We inclined to the theory that Hill and Jones had in the beginning merely shammed lunacy as a passport for England, but that under the mental stress and nervous strain of living their abnormal rôles had really become insane. Another suggestion was that they had lost their reason already at Yózgad, as a result of dabbling overmuch in spiritualism.

It was White who solved the mystery, although at the time he revealed it only to me. With a

badly-marked ankle, the result of a too-hot poultice, well in evidence, he arrived one day from Afion-Kara-Hissar, and suggested to the doctors that the ankle was tubercular. He was placed in the bed next to the scarecrow's.

Hill had let it be known that he was undertaking a forty days' penance, during which he would eat nothing but bread. All other food offered him by the Turks he ignored. After a few days of semi-starvation his cheek-bones were more prominent than ever, his cheeks more hollowed, and the colour of his face was an unhealthy faint yellow.

In the middle of the night, when everybody else was asleep, White awoke him and passed over a note. In this, as a fellow-Australian, he offered any sort of assistance that might be acceptable. Then he handed Hill some chocolate and biscuits, taken from a newly-arrived parcel. These the scarecrow accepted. Not daring to whisper in case somebody were listening, he wrote a sanely-worded message, thanking White for the offer, which he accepted. It contained, also, a warning that, for safety's sake, the other Britishers must be led to believe that both he and Jones were mad.

Thereafter White fed him secretly each night. In the daytime he maintained his long fast, to the great astonishment of the Turks. White likewise helped by complaining that the madman woke him at night-time and asked him to pray.

Later, having heard escape-talk between White and me, Hill wrote down an address where we might hide in Constantinople, and let me into the

secret that he was pretending lunacy so as to be sent out of the country as a madman.

Now that I knew the scarecrow and Ahmed Hamdi Jones to be sane as myself, I marvelled at their flawless presentation of different aspects of lunacy, and at the determination which allowed them to play their strange parts for months. Hill, in particular, had a difficult rôle, and I wondered that his mind never gave way under it. To sit up in bed for twelve hours a day, reading and re-reading a Bible; to talk to nobody and look at nobody, and to show no sign of interest when vital subjects were being discussed by fellow-prisoners a few yards away; to pray aloud for nearly half an hour each morning and evening, in the presence of a dozen people; to maintain an expression of rigid melancholy, and not to let even the ghost of a smile touch one's features for many weeks—all this must require almost inhuman concentration.

Jones had a far better time, for his specialty was not studied tragedy but spontaneous farce. He seemed to enjoy enormously the complete fooling of all around him, the planning of a new fantasy and the head-over-heels performance of it, without the restraint of convention or ridicule, or a sense of the normal.

Cheerful lunacy, in fact, is great fun. Even in my own minor assumptions of a state of unreason I had found it very stimulating and amusing. A mental holiday from logic, custom, the consideration of public opinion and other irksome boundaries of artificial stability, is glorious. Itself untrammelled, the mind can watch from a spec-

tator's point of view the patchwork restraints and littlenesses of civilisation, and take delight in tilting at them.

Often I envied Jones, with his fez, his golden beard, and his rôle of Ahmed Hamdi Effendi, as he talked to a group of Turkish officers. They would laugh at him openly; but secretly he would laugh much more heartily at them.

Few things in our roomful of nine British officers were not farcical. Only one of us—old W. with his wounded arm—had any real claim to be in hospital. R., with a healed wound-scar dating back to the Gallipoli campaign, C., with sciatica and late middle-age, and Ms., with a weak knee dating back to before the war, were trying to build up a case for release as exchanged prisoners of war. Jones and Hill, by means of magnificent acting, had made everybody believe in their assumed madness, and were also hoping to be sent home in consequence. "Wormy"—formerly aide-de-camp to General Townsend—wanted to remain a hospital patient because he had friends and amusements in Constantinople, and achieved this wish by means of mythical *hæmorrhages*.

For my part, I still gave false evidence of nervous disorders, although such efforts were dwarfed by the exploits of Jones and Hill. In any case, it was to my interest to show only mild symptoms, such as fits of trembling during an air-raid, or whenever a gun was fired. Had I been more violent, I should not have been allowed into the city on Sundays, at a time when I had made useful acquaintances and was plotting an escape.

So the strange days passed. Hill and Jones, spurred by reports of a near-future exchange of prisoners, gave constant and enlivening performances. Ms. and R. cultivated effective limps. "Wormy" amused himself. White and I discussed our plans while strolling in the garden. Each morning the doctor walked once round the ward, said to each patient, "*Bonjour, ça va bien?*" signed the diet sheets, and left us. Of other medical attendance there was none, except when W.'s arm was operated on, or when Jones complained to the chief doctor about our desire to murder him.

How the madmen were included in the first batch of British prisoners to be exchanged from Turkey, how they were led on board the Red Cross ship that the Turks had allowed into the Gulf of Smyrna, how Ahmed Hamdi Jones protested against being handed over to his enemies the British, and how he and the Bible-reader miraculously recovered their sanity as soon as the British vessel had left Turkish waters—all that is a story in itself.

CHAPTER X.

INTRODUCING THEODORE THE GREEK, JOHN WILLIE THE BOSNIAN, AND DAVID LLOYD GEORGE'S SECOND COUSIN.

THE Maritza is a little restaurant near Stamboul station. Coming toward it from Galata Bridge one passes along a side-street so narrow that the bodies of passengers clinging to the rails of the swaying, much-loaded tram-cars often collide with pedestrians. With a guard at our heels, we would disappear through a doorway, and find ourselves in a low room that reeked of sausages and intrigue.

Whenever the captive officers at Psamatia came to Stamboul they lunched at the Maritza, where they could hear the latest rumours from the bazaars. On Sundays they were joined there by not-too-sick officers from our hospital and that of Haidar Pasha.

Theodore, the Greek waiter, looked exactly what he was — a professional conspirator who had strayed from melodrama into real life. In the whole of Turkey there was no greater expert at throwing dust into the eyes of soldiers and gendarmes. He not only lived by plotting,

but, next to money, seemed to like it better than anything in the world.

He was also a first-rate gossip. Having seated the guards in a corner where they could see but not hear us, the little Greek, with his bent shoulders and blue-glassed spectacles, would sidle up to our table, and producing a menu-card, say—

"*Bon jour!* What would you like, gentlemen?" Then, running his finger down the list as if suggesting something to eat, he would continue: "I heard to-day that the Grand Vizier had quarrelled once more with the Sultan"; or, "Enver Pasha was shot at in Galata yesterday, and is wounded in the chest. It is said that he will not recover." He never failed to produce at least one such rumour. Most often he would announce that Bulgaria was about to make a separate peace, which possibility was reported in Constantinople at least a dozen times before it really happened.

I always found him trustworthy, for his hatred of the Turks was stronger even than his greed for money. No sum could have tempted him to become a spy in the service of the Turkish police—a position once offered him. In any case, he was always convinced that the British would win the war; and therefore, knowing which side his bread was buttered, he would never have dared to betray the Britishers who employed him.

As an intermediary for correspondence he was reliable but expensive, his charge being twenty piastres for each letter delivered.

"Theodore, my friend," one would say, "I want you to go to Pera for me."

"Good! If you have not written the letter, I will engage the guards while you prepare it."

He strolled across to the guards' table with the news that the British officers would be pleased to buy them whatever they wanted to eat; and the prisoner scribbled his note, a slip of paper resting on his lap and the body of Theodore screening him from the guards in the far corner. Later, the letter would be handed to the Greek waiter in the middle of the Turkish notes with which one paid the bill.

If a reply were brought, Theodore delivered it under cover of a menu-card, always with a whispered reminder, "Twenty piastres." During the last six months of the war he must have been the messenger for scores of secret communications.

It was early in July when we heard of the arrival, in Haidar Pasha Hospital — across the Sea of Marmora—of Captain Yeats-Brown and Captain Sir Robert Paul. Yeats-Brown was demanding attention for his nose and Paul for his ear. With vivid memories of conversations in Afion, I had sympathy for neither the nose nor the ear, but a great deal for the schemes of escape which I knew them to be planning. I sent Yeats-Brown a note, through the agency of Theodore, suggesting an appointment for lunch on the following Sunday.

As a matter of fact, I met him before lunch-time. With the rest of the congregation we

were leaving for the little English church off the Grande Rue de Pera, when the pair approached the vestry door, with guards at their heels. Since I last saw them both had grown moustaches, and an appearance of dishevelled untidiness was given to Paul by a short stubby tuft of beard. At the time I was talking to Miss Whitaker, and I took the opportunity of introducing the new arrivals. Paul drew Miss Whitaker aside and began talking earnestly, while Yeats-Brown told me that the guards' orders were to take him direct to Haidar Pasha, and that we should have to wait a week longer before meeting at the Maritza.

Next Sunday afternoon, on entering the little restaurant, I heard Yeats-Brown asking Theodore to show him where a special brand of cigarettes might be bought. This he did in a loud voice, speaking Turkish, as if he wished the guards to overhear. The pair left the doorway and disappeared into a tobacco-shop. Both departed bareheaded, so that the guards remained in their seats and were unsuspicious.

Paul was at a table near them, taking great care to appear unconcerned. His beard had grown longer during the past seven days, and he looked stranger and more dishevelled than ever.

Five minutes later he and I were joined by Yeats-Brown, who, as he returned with Theodore, took care to flaunt a newly-bought box of cigarettes before the eyes of his guard. He had been to look at the outside of Theodore's own house, so that he might recognise it. He and

Paul were to be turned out of hospital two days later. They had had no time to arrange a definite scheme, but as they were to be sent to Asia Minor very shortly, they would have to escape almost immediately. I did not seek to join them, for White and I were still safe in Gumuch Souyou, and had hopes of stealing an aeroplane. I therefore wished Yeats-Brown the best of luck, and after returning to hospital waited anxiously for news.

Our first intimation of what had happened came when the chief doctor announced that no Britishers were to be allowed into the city, because two prisoners had escaped. Soon afterwards a Russian, who arrived from Psamatia with influenza, brought details. With their bank-notes (obtained from Mr S., a British civilian living in Pera) sewn in their underclothes, with faces and hands stained brown, and each wearing a fez, the pair climbed out of a window at Psamatia in the middle of the night, crept along a ledge, tied a rope to the gutter of the roof, and let themselves down into a dark doorway. The rope was found in the morning still dangling from the roof. Since then, three days ago, nothing had been heard of them.

Meanwhile the hopes of White and myself revolved round John Willie the Bosnian. This man, an aviator who was a lieutenant in the Turkish Flying Corps, had been shot down in Palestine, and in the ward next to ours was receiving treatment for minor injuries. He had told Ms. that in a few weeks' time he

would desert from Turkey by aeroplane. He wanted a letter of recommendation, to be presented to the British when he landed at Mudros. Ms. refused to write such a compromising letter, and, not trusting the Bosnian, disregarded a suggestion that he should be taken as passenger in the proposed flight to Mudros.

Next, Ms. having left the hospital, the Bosnian approached me. Finding that I was a fellow-aviator, his first overtures dealt, innocuously enough, with war-flying in general and his own experiences in particular. Then, one evening he announced that he was about to tell me an important secret. I knew what was coming, but was careful to pretend ignorance.

John Willie — the name by which he became known to us, for we dared not risk suspicion by mentioning his real name when we talked among ourselves in the presence of Turks— thereupon produced an English grammar and said I must make pretence of teaching him English, so that we might meet each day. He would tell the Turkish doctors that I had become his schoolmaster.

His first suggestion, as we sat down on a shady bench, was that I should write him a letter to take to Mudros. Like Ms. I declined, not knowing what was at the back of his mind. A Turkish corporal passed the bench, whereupon John Willie began mispronouncing some English words, taken at random from the page of the grammar which lay open on his lap.

"If," I said, "you can get me an aeroplane to

fly to Mudros myself I will— The book is on the table, *das Buch liegt auf dem Tische—*" This last when the Turkish corporal turned back and glanced at us as he passed a second time.

"Zé book eéz on tâbel," repeated John Willie. Then, in German, "I was going to suggest the same thing myself."

John Willie proceeded to reveal the reasons why he was so anxious to desert. As a Bosnian, he said, he hated the Austrians, and it was because of this that he entered the Turkish and not the Austrian army. In any case his mother was an American, now in the United States, and his brother, so he learned, had enlisted in the American army. His own sympathies were pro-British and pro-American, and it was his earnest desire to join his mother and become naturalised as an American citizen. If he landed at Mudros in Turkish uniform, he would be made a prisoner of war; whereas if, as a guarantee of good faith, he took with him a British prisoner or a letter from a British prisoner, all would be well. A friend of his, he declared, had already deserted by air, taking with him a letter to the British from General Townsend.

Next he proceeded to give details of his plan, while running his finger over the open page of the English grammar, as if reading from it. In about a fortnight's time he would be discharged from hospital, and through the influence of a friendly staff officer he would be posted to the aerodrome at San Stefano. This aerodrome, situated about twenty miles from Stamboul,

was the headquarters of the German pilots who made a pretence of defending Constantinople from British air-raids.

Having arranged to be appointed orderly officer for the night, and being the only pilot in the neighbourhood of the hangars (for the officers' billets were in San Stefano itself, half a mile from the aerodrome), it would be easy for him to take a petrol-loaded machine into the air, head westward, fly over the Dardanelles to the open sea, and so to Mudros. If, continued John Willie, I could make my way to San Stefano, it would be a simple matter for him to pick me up at some place of rendezvous near the aerodrome, and to take me as passenger in his back seat.

But, I objected, there would be a friend with me, and if I flew to Mudros he also must come. The Bosnian showed his eagerness by an evident determination to override all suggested difficulties. A two-seated Rumpler, he pointed out, could take, besides the pilot, two men in the observer's cockpit. The only drawback was that if three of us travelled in the same machine our combined weight would add at least three-quarters of an hour to the flight for freedom, and should we be chased and attacked an adequate defence would be made difficult. He proposed that I might pilot the two-seater, while he followed and pretended to give chase in an Albatros scout. He was more than willing to escort two of us to Mudros if we would sponsor him with the British authorities and pay his passage to America.

Several times during the days that followed I plotted with the Bosnian in the garden, always with the English grammar as cover for earnest talks. Finally, after discussing every detail, we evolved a plan which seemed workable. When John Willie should have been posted to San Stefano, White and I were to claim that we were cured. We should then be transferred to Psamatia, which was already half-way between Stamboul and San Stefano. He refused to take the risk of helping us to escape from Psamatia, but he would meet us after we should have reached the neighbourhood of the aerodrome. He could arrange to be night orderly officer between two given dates, and during this period he would seek us at the place of rendezvous each morning at 3 A.M.

His plan, having found us, was to go to the hangars, and on the pretence of testing a Rumpler two-seater, take it into the air. He would land in a field near us, keeping his engine ticking over. White and I must run towards him and climb into the rear cockpit. He would leave the ground again immediately, and head for the Dardanelles.

Even taking into account the heavy load of three men pursuit seemed unlikely, because all the other pilots would be asleep in their billets. In any case, it was improbable that the mechanics from the aerodrome would see us climbing into the Rumpler. We abandoned the suggestion that I should fly the two-seater while the Bosnian gave chase in an Albatros, as we failed to think of a plausible tale for

John Willie to tell his mechanics, by way of explaining how the Rumpler could have been stolen from him by strangers.

The Bosnian drew detailed maps, giving the position of the aerodrome in relation to San Stefano station, with the hangars, the officers' mess, and other buildings marked on it. The place of rendezvous was to be the fringe of a small wood that bordered a field south-west of the aerodrome, on the left-hand side of the road to Bulgaria.

John Willie also procured for us a German staff-map, which included the countryside between Psamatia and San Stefano. White and I had decided, however, to give the guards the slip during the daytime in one of the winding side-streets of Stamboul, to buy tickets openly at the railway station, and to travel to San Stefano as ordinary passengers. Using John Willie's pencilled map, we could then find the place of rendezvous and lie low in the wood until the following morning.

Meanwhile, now that Sunday visits to the city were forbidden, I employed the Bosnian as messenger for letters to Theodore. We had in mind the alternative plan of a stowaway voyage from Constantinople across the Black Sea, and we intended to carry it out if John Willie failed us. We could not altogether trust him, for he continued to demand small loans for preliminary expenses. He showed himself, besides, to be both careless and heedless, so that he seemed a far from desirable companion for a desperate adventure. We found that in

conversation with some English Tommies, who were patients in another ward, he had boasted of his plan to take White and myself to Mudros; and we feared that any day, with so many people discussing it, the story might be overheard by an English-speaking doctor.

Possibly that is what happened; for I noticed that each time the Bosnian and I met in the garden we were watched closely. One of the patients—a bearded, shifty-looking Turk with one arm in a sling—made it his business to sit on the same bench, and to listen while I pretended to give instructions in the proper pronunciation of English. Although I warned John Willie to be very careful, he failed to realise the danger, and continued to make us all the more conspicuous by talking in a low voice.

One afternoon he approached me with the English grammar open in his hand, and pointed to a folded note which lay on one of its pages. Two Turkish nurses were passing. Seeing that they looked at the book, I turned the page quickly to hide the note. But the nurses had apparently seen everything, for as they entered the door of the hospital they whispered and turned back. A few minutes later the doctor on duty joined us in the garden, and told John Willie that in future it would be forbidden to talk with British prisoners.

Yet we managed three further meetings, which took place at the wash-house late in the evening. Then John Willie disappeared suddenly from the hospital, and we were left to our own resources.

We still had his maps of San Stefano; and when the period set for the escape arrived, a prearranged signal from him would tell us if he were still prepared to take us to Mudros. This was that, on the Sunday morning preceding the first day of rendezvous, he was to fly over Psamatia in a Nieuport scout and perform stunts.

Meanwhile, White and I now lacked a go-between. More than ever it was necessary that one or both of us should see Theodore and try to get into touch with somebody on the Russian steamer *Batoum*, which I could see from our ward window, moored opposite the Sultan's Palace of Dolma Bagtché.

Every request that we might be permitted to visit the shops was refused. When White asked to see a dentist in Constantinople he was referred to the military dentist in the hospital. We had almost decided to leave for Psamatia before our time, when chance provided a way out.

My fame as a teacher of English had spread through the hospital. Aziz Bey, a young Turkish doctor, arrived at my bedside one morning, with text-books and a request for lessons. I agreed willingly, and in a few days became quite friendly with him over verb conjugations and references to the green socks worn by the son of the gardener.

At that time intelligent Turks, many of whom hated the Germans worse even than they hated the Armenians, were just beginning to realise that the Allies might win the war.

Aziz Bey referred to this possibility, and expressed admiration for the British. In particular, he praised a man named Meester Djavid Loijorgé, who, it appeared, was the principal leader of the Allies. Djavid Loijorgé, declared Aziz Bey, was a very great man indeed.

It was then that, without any forethought, an inspiration came to me. Remembering the fear inspired in all Turks by such despotic ministers as Talaat and Enver, and realising the consideration that would be paid to any connection of the British Prime Minister, whom Aziz Bey would regard as a kind of western Talaat Pasha, I announced—

"Mr David Lloyd George is a very great man indeed, and I am his second cousin."

"Really?" said Aziz after a taken-aback pause, with credulity and obvious respect. "I never expected to learn English from a relative of Meester Loijorgé."

I hastened to explain that the matter was confidential, and must not be talked about, as I did not wish the Turkish Minister of War to know it. I relied upon him, as a friend, to keep the relationship secret. He promised, and as far as I know only broke the promise to the extent of telling four or five or ten or twelve friends of his, all of whom treated me with the greatest consideration.

Now I am neither a second cousin of Mr David Lloyd George, nor anxious for such relationship. But in view of the curious circumstances, I was bold enough to believe that the statesman would not have objected to the claim. It needed little

persuasion to induce Aziz Bey to take Mr Lloyd George's second cousin into Constantinople whenever he had a free afternoon; and the chief doctor, who was let into the secret, gave the required permission readily enough.

Aziz and another doctor, whose name I forget, invited me to tea in the Tokatlian Hotel and the Petits Champs Gardens, took me on the Bosphorus and the Sea of Marmora, and introduced me, after preliminary whisperings, to several of their friends.

Fortunately for me the news from the Western Front was then taking a turn for the better. Hindenburg's great drive was expended, and the Germans had been thrown back across the Marne. With each day's telegrams Mr Lloyd George's second cousin gained further respect; and finally he was given permission to visit the shops of Pera, escorted only by a guard.

I walked over Galata bridge to the Maritza restaurant, and there was fortunate enough to find Prince Constantine Avaloff. He was making inquiries, he said, among the officers of the *Batoum*. He thought that, for a suitable bribe, they would be quite willing, when the ship left for Odessa, to take White and myself as stowaways. The *Batoum* was expected to leave in about three weeks' time.

From Avaloff, who was still in touch with Yeats-Brown and Paul, I heard of their adventures after escaping from Psamatia. Yeats-Brown was still at large in the city, dressed in girl's clothes, lent him by Miss Whitaker. Paul, from whom Avaloff had just received a letter,

was trekking towards the Gulf of Enos, with a young Greek waiter from the Maritza as guide. They hoped to put to sea from near Enos. Paul, who spoke Arabic fluently, was dressed as an Arab. I remembered the tuft of unkempt beard which he had been growing before his escape, and now saw the reason for it.

Meanwhile a party that included Yeats-Brown and two Turkish officers were waiting in Constantinople on the result of Paul's attempt. If he succeeded, said Avaloff, they would follow in his tracks, and the Greek boatman would return to the Gulf of Enos for them.

White and I decided, out of consideration for Miss Whitaker, not to ask her for any help, for since the escape of Paul and Yeats-Brown she had been closely watched. The Turkish police suspected her connivance, especially when they heard that she had met them in the park at Stamboul on the day before they left Psamatia. On the following Sunday morning, for the first time in three weeks, we were allowed to attend service in the English Church at Pera. We took care never to look at Miss Whitaker, not knowing whether one of Constantinople's myriad informers might be among the congregation.

For the moment our greatest problem was to obtain funds. We hoped to find a banker in Mr S., the English merchant who, on his own responsibility and at great risk to himself, had several times cashed large cheques for officers who wanted to escape. We knew several Armenian and Greek merchants, but these we could not induce to supply us with money, as we had

no orthodox cheque-books. Such cheques as we cashed on the Dutch Legation, or on Mr S., were written on sheets of blank paper.

In those days British bombers from Mudros and Imbros were visiting Constantinople every fine moonlit night, and spreading great terror all over the city. Whenever an alarum, false or real, was given, we were wakened by the firing of scores of machine-guns planted on the near-by roofs. Turkish soldiers, who love fireworks, would continue firing into the vacant air for hours, until all their ammunition was exhausted, merely for the pleasure of hearing the rap-rapping. Except on one occasion the bombs themselves did little damage; but many people were killed by the chance-falling bullets from the machine-guns.

Sometimes the aeroplanes came during the daytime; and then, anxious to see some of our own machines, we would race into the garden while the Turks were scurrying from it into the shelter of the hospital. Once a very fat Turkish pasha, with paunch and dignity well to the fore, paid Gumuch Souyou a visit of inspection, and happened to be in the middle of the garden when the anti-aircraft firing began. He cast off the dignity, and would doubtless have liked to cast off the paunch, as he raced for the hospital door and inquired for the underground baths.

The Turkish love of fireworks was useful to me during the Mahommedan month of Ramazan. At each sunset guns were fired and puff-balls were exploded, at intervals of a few seconds, all round Constantinople. Whenever I went into

the city with Aziz Bey I arranged that we should be at sunset near Taxim Gardens, opposite which some puff-balls were exploded. On the first explosion I started violently and began to tremble, then continued to swerve and shiver at each subsequent noise. On returning to Gumuch Souyou I would demand aspirin and bromide to calm my nerves, which—as Aziz Bey could bear witness—must still be in bad condition. This I did because a few days earlier it had been suggested that I was now in a fit state to return to a prisoners' camp; whereas we were still a fortnight from the opening date of rendezvous with John Willie the Bosnian, and from the time when the *Batoum* might be expected to weigh anchor.

But ill-luck disbanded the queer company in the prisoners ward of Gumuch Souyou Hospital early in the following week. On Sunday afternoon, after our visit to the church, White, R., and I visited some of my newly-made acquaintances, in a street behind the Tokatlian. Our two guards, bribed for the purpose and placated with a promise that we would return to them in an hour's time, loafed outside the doorway. One of the city's innumerable police spies saw us handing over a fifty-piastre note. Having discovered that we were British officers, he reported the incident to the War Office. Next morning all but the two madmen were ordered to Psamatia, at an hour's notice.

White and I were not disappointed, for it now wanted but a week to July the 7th, when, at three o'clock in the morning, we might expect to meet John Willie the Bosnian at the corner

of a wood outside San Stefano aerodrome. Meanwhile there remained the urgent necessity of cashing some cheques on Mr S.; for only ready money could make possible our escape, whether we flew to Mudros or crossed the Black Sea as stowaways on the *Batoum*.

CHAPTER XI.

THE THIRD AND FOURTH FAILURES.

"THE clothes of the Capitaine Paul," demanded with triumphant satisfaction Zikki Bey, our one-eyed Turkish officer at Psamatia prison. "The Capitaine Paul needs the clothes he left here, because he finds his Arab dress unsuitable for the Ministry of War prison."

For the past two days we had heard rumours of Paul's recapture. Yet Zikki Bey's unwelcome confirmation, as he interrupted a bridge party one evening, was a shock to us. The cards were abandoned as we prepared clothes and food to be sent to whatever cell of the infamous "Black Hole of Constantinople" Paul might have been taken, still dressed in the Arab disguise in which he had tried to reach the Gulf of Enos.

The bad news was an especial blow to four of us—White, Fulton, Stone, and myself,—for we ourselves were preparing to bolt within a few days. Others regarded it more philosophically. Among the party was a certain colonel who deprecated attempts at flight, because they reacted on one's fellow-prisoners. He contended

that it was impossible for a Britisher to escape from Turkey.

"I knew it, I knew it," he now said; "they've nabbed Paul, and soon they'll nab Yeats-Brown."

A few days later, having heard that certain others were ready to flit, the Colonel delivered an ultimatum. Already the restrictions at Psamatia were severe, because of the disappearance of Paul and Yeats-Brown. If others went, he said, life would not be worth living, especially for such people as had prepared medical histories of well-imagined ailments, and were hoping to see their names on the list of prisoners to be exchanged as unfit.

"After the war I'll heng, draw, and quartah the next fellow who clears off from Psamatia," he told Fulton, Stone, and myself, slapping a knee that rested on the garden wall. "A successful escape can't be done in Turkey, and it's futile to try."

Five days later four of us did clear off from Psamatia. The war is over long since; but for some reason or other we remain unhenged, undrawn, and unquartahed. As for the pronouncement that to escape from Turkey was impossible, within six weeks no less than ten men proved the contrary.

White and I had been at Psamatia for ten days. Although visits to Stamboul were now forbidden, we managed to go there three times, on the pretence of seeing a dentist. We saw Theodore, and through him received from Mr S. three hundred Turkish pounds, in return for foolscap-paper cheques.

After very careful consideration we had chosen the plan of crossing the Black Sea as stowaways, in preference to that of trusting John Willie to fly us out of the country. Since his sudden disappearance from the hospital we had heard no definite word of the Bosnian aviator; unless, indeed, a rumour that a Bosnian officer was in the Ministry of War prison as a political suspect applied to him.

Moreover, he either failed to give us the signal that he was ready, or gave it otherwise than according to plan. On the Sunday morning preceding the first date of the rendezvous outside San Stefano aerodrome, he was to have flown over Psamatia on a Nieuport scout and performed stunts to attract my attention. An aeroplane did fly over Psamatia, and even looped the loop several times; but it was a big two-seater instead of a little Nieuport.

Under the circumstances we decided not to risk losing the comparative certainty of a slow journey to freedom, by way of Russia, for the dubious uncertainty of a quick flight to Mudros.

Fulton and Stone were glad enough to inherit our arrangements with John Willie, and to take the chance of meeting him at San Stefano. Now that Paul was captured they were at a loose end, for if he had succeeded they would have followed in his footsteps by joining the second party that was to make for the Gulf of Enos. I gave them my map of the aerodrome, showing the place of rendezvous, and also a non-commital note, scribbled in German, which would explain their identity if they met the Bosnian.

For White and myself a passage on the tramp steamer *Batoum* was definitely arranged. Prince Avaloff had shown himself to be a too-talkative intermediary; but White found a more useful man in Lieutenant Vladimir Wilkowsky, a Polish aviator whom he had known at Afion-Kara-Hissar. Unlike us, the Russians were still allowed into Stamboul with their guards. Having placated his particular guard with a bribe, Wilkowsky often crossed the Golden Horn alone. Several times he met Titoff, the *Batoum's* chief engineer, in cafés at Galata. After much bargaining, he completed arrangements whereby White and I were to travel as stowaways.

Zikki Bey warned us that everybody at Psamatia would be sent into Anatolia very shortly. Thereupon Fulton, Stone, White, and I went into conference, and decided to forestall the removal by making our dash two days later, on August the 21st. This suited Fulton and Stone, as it would bring them to the period named by the Bosnian aviator. For White and myself a hiding-place in Pera, where we could remain until the *Batoum* sailed, had been arranged by Titoff. A Russian civilian was to conceal us; and, after giving our guards the slip, we were to meet him by appointment at a beer-house in the Rue de Galata.

On the morning of August the 21st, all four of us left Psamatia by the ten o'clock train on the little suburban railway that runs between Stamboul and San Stefano. It would be less difficult to dodge the guards if we were in two parties; so Fulton and Stone chose an optician

as their excuse for a trip to Stamboul, while White and I were to visit our friend the dentist. Our real destination was the beer-house in the Rue de Galata, that of the other pair being the small wood outside San Stefano.

We split up into twos as the train steamed up, Fulton's farewell being, "Good-bye, old man. See you in quod to-morrow!" He and Stone went into a compartment near the engine, while White and I chose the rear end of the train. All of us hoped to lose our guards among the crowd at Stamboul station.

Ten minutes before we should have reached Stamboul, the god of coincidence sent an extraordinary opportunity. Just beyond Koum-kapou the train rounded a sharp corner and ran into some empty trucks that were stationary on the line. There was a succession of clangs, a violent shock, and many a jolt and jar, mingled with screams, gasps, and frightened confusion.

One of our two guards fell on to an iron platform between the carriages. The other, unfortunately, kept both his balance and his head.

I was standing a yard in front of him, behind White.

"Now's our chance. I'm off!" said White, as he pushed his way through the struggling passengers to the farther end of the compartment. I began to follow, but seeing that the guard was already suspicious of White's movements, I slowed down and pretended to pacify a nervous woman, thus blocking the guard's advance and allowing White more room.

"He's after you," I called, as White turned his head.

In the confusion White misunderstood these words as "I'm with you." Thinking that I was ready to follow him, he edged his way to the steps at the far end of the compartment. The guard, meanwhile, shouted a warning to his companion, who had picked himself up and left the train. This second guard ran towards White along the railway embankment.

White was wearing a cap. In his inside pocket he had a felt hat, his idea being to change headgear in a crowd so that the guards, looking for a man with a cap, would fail to notice him. I now saw him fling the cap under the carriage, jam the felt hat on his head, descend from the train and jump down the embankment.

The guard with me yelled, while the second Turkish soldier leaped down the embankment, clutched at White, and almost caught him. White dodged clear, and the last I saw of him that day was as he raced down a narrow winding street, pulling and pushing out of his way the Turks and Greeks who streamed in the opposite direction, towards the scene of the collision. Close behind him the guard gave chase, while commanding passers-by to stop the British prisoner.

I jumped down the embankment, partly in a desperate attempt to elude the other guard, and partly to create a diversion for White. At the bottom of the slope I twisted my ankle and fell. My guard dropped on top of me. We scrambled to our feet, myself unstable on the

weak ankle, and the Turk clutching my right arm with both his hands. Under the circumstances it was useless to struggle. I remained quiet, while the guard called to his aid a passing soldier.

I stood at the bottom of the embankment, gripped painfully by the two Turks. The moments that followed were indescribably bitter. White was probably at liberty, with the glorious prospect of a successful escape. I had failed for the third time since capture, and was probably booked for a cell under the Turkish Ministry of War. My one consolation, my one hope, was in the wads of money distributed among various parts of my clothing. These would provide a chance to bribe the guards into silence, leaving me free for another attempt before the British prisoners at Psamatia were moved to Anatolia.

The three of us remained thus for ten minutes, an unregarded island in the sea of people that surged round the derailed coaches. The shaken passengers were climbing down the slope, the new arrivals were climbing up it to see the wreckage. A few yards away first aid was being administered to an injured woman.

Presently I saw Fulton and Stone approaching from the front of the train. They stopped short on seeing me held by two soldiers. I shook my head and signalled them not to come any nearer, whereupon they edged their guards away.

The guard who had chased White returned, alternately cursing and invoking the wrath of Allah on all Englishmen. In his anger he took off his cloth hat, threw it on the ground, shook his fist at me and said, "English very bad!"

Although White had eluded him, he did not give up hope at once, but led us through a maze of alleys and streets, peering forlornly into the doorways of shops and houses and through the gratings of cellars. Finally, he held a conference with his companions, and determined to take me to Koum-kapou police station. My ankle, I was glad to find, had been ricked only slightly, and was now normal again.

"English very bad," said the man who had chased White, in the clipped Turkish used between prisoners and guards. "We," pointing to himself and my own guard—"prison. Prison very bad. No food."

"Here is food for prison," I consoled him, handing over two Turkish pounds.

The sight of money partly pacified them, and their anger cooled. Soon they were in a fit state of mind to talk *baksheesh*, that touchstone of the Turkish character.

I produced ten more bank-notes, each of one Turkish pound. Again using pidgin-Turkish, with many an expressive gesture, I offered them to the guards, on condition that when we reached the police station they would say that although White had escaped I made no attempt to do so.

The matter needed several minutes of explanation before misunderstandings were cleared up, so that we withdrew into a side street. The two guards needed little persuasion to make them accept. Thereupon the third man (the soldier who helped to hold me at the bottom of the embankment) demanded a share. To

satisfy him I was forced to produce a further sum of five Turkish pounds. He saluted and left us.

The two guards carried on an animated talk for some time longer, discussing what tale to the police would show them in the best light. They decided, apparently, not to admit having seen White escape and let him give them the slip, but to claim that he vanished when we were all knocked down by the collision.

I remembered that the food supplies in my pockets might be incriminating evidence. I had, also, a dangerous slip of paper, on which Wilkowsky had drawn a plan of the Galata beer-house in which I was to meet Titoff's Russian friend. This I disposed of by tearing it into shreds behind my back, and dropping the fragments a few at a time, as in a paper-chase.

The packets of food were rather more difficult to lose. A tin of Oxo cubes I flung surreptitiously on to a dust-heap. Some sticks of bivouac chocolate I left on a convenient window-sill. The worst problem was a small bag containing a mixture of cocoa and grape-nuts, taken from one of White's parcels from home. I could hardly throw this away unobserved; and the police station was already in sight.

A woman stood in a doorway and gazed at us. As we brushed past her on the narrow pavement, I took the bag from my pocket, dumped it into her hand, and moved on without a word or a sign. When, from a few yards ahead, I looked back, she had opened the bag and was staring in wide-eyed surprise at the cocoa—then quite

unobtainable in Constantinople—which had fallen as from heaven.

The guards told a rambling tale to the police officer, who took notes of their description of White, and sent out three gendarmes to search the streets for him. Afterwards I was taken into an inner room and searched. Nothing was found to brand me as a suspect. The pockets were quite empty; and my larger bank-notes—one of a hundred Turkish pounds, one of fifty, and one of twenty-five—were undiscovered, being sewn into suspenders and braces. Finally, as the result of the twelve Turkish pounds' worth of good character given me by the guards, I continued the journey to the military dentist in Stamboul, after a guard had telephoned the news of White's disappearance to Psamatia.

Desperate after my failure in face of White's success, I made an unwise bolt for freedom across the ruins of a recent fire. Before the guards had recovered from their surprise I reached a half-demolished wall at the far end of an open space. I shinned over the wall, and found myself in a blind alley. Straight ahead was a house, and another building cut off the exit to the right. To the left was a bare wall, too high to be climbed. I turned round, walked back to meet the furious guards, and handed them another pound-note apiece. They gasped; but a sense of humour dissolved anger into laughter.

We continued to walk towards Stamboul; but each of my arms was now held tightly. Several times I heard the guards mention Theodore, so that I was not surprised when they led me into

a small café near the quay (the Maritza restaurant being then out of bounds for prisoners), where one of them stayed with me while the other fetched the Greek waiter to act as interpreter.

"First," said Theodore, after he had listened to the guards' story, "you must give parole for the rest of the day."

I agreed readily enough; and over pots of beer —I only met one Mohammedan guard whose religious principles prevented him from accepting alcoholic drink in a hidden spot—the party became more amiable. The Turks' object in fetching Theodore was that he might explain to me a story which would saddle them with a minimum of blame for White's escape. If I corroborated this yarn they would agree not to mention my own misdeeds to the commandant at Psamatia. Again I accepted.

We discussed and amended the story, which in its final form was divided into four parts—(1) The train collision; (2) the shock that knocked the four of us over and separated guards from prisoners; (3) the confusion; (4) the discovery that White had disappeared, unknown to the rest of the party.

Through Theodore I now offered the guards fifty Turkish pounds if they would turn their backs and let me walk out alone. They refused regretfully, saying that to lose two prisoners in one day would be as much as their lives were worth. They reminded me of my promise, and we left the café for the dentist's surgery, where I was obliged to allow a perfectly sound tooth to be stopped.

Back at Psamatia I found all the prisoners shut up in their rooms. The Turkish commandant was gibbering with rage. As we entered the arched doorway he rushed from his office and boxed the guards' ears. They bore it without a sound, comforted no doubt by the seven Turkish pounds which each of them had concealed in his clothing.

We told our separate but corroborative tales —how that we had been knocked over by the shock and missed White in the confusion. White was queer in the head, I explained; and it was possible that, having been further unbalanced by the collision, he wandered away, not knowing where he was going. The commandant, ready to clutch at anything that might save his official knuckles from a rapping, affected to take the suggestion seriously, and embodied it in his report. He pretended to hope that White would recover his memory and senses, and return of his own free will.

Later, the commandant, after telephonic communication with the Ministry of War, ordered all the British prisoners to prepare for a journey into Anatolia on the following day. With Fulton and Stone, who returned from their visit to the optician without having had a chance to escape, I conferred on how we could get clear in the short time left to us.

Fulton and Stone planned to leave the prison-house during the night, but I decided to wait until morning. They wanted to leave Constantinople for San Stefano, whereas I wanted to remain in the city; and if I escaped before

dawn I should have nowhere to spend the night hours, and should lay myself open to the curiosity of gendarmes. In any case I was uncertain whether or not my parole, given to the guards, ought to extend till midnight.

The three of us occupied the same bedroom. A small window from the adjoining passage opened on to a drain-pipe. It was decided that Fulton should climb up this pipe to the roof, until he was firmly established on the gutter. Stone would hand him a rope and their boots, and then himself climb the drain-pipe. They would crawl along a succession of roofs, keeping in the shadow, until they reached the top of a house about fifty yards distant, which overlooked a side street outside the camp sentries' range of vision. Having fastened the rope to a chimney or to some other stable object, they could let themselves down to the road when it was conveniently deserted, with the boots slung round their necks. They planned to tramp the fifteen miles to San Stefano during the night, leaving Constantinople through the gate at Yedi-Kuli.

That evening the sentries in the yard, stimulated by White's escape, were more alert than usual. Fulton and Stone were hampered, also, by a full moon, which for some hours lit up the corner outside the window. Not until just before midnight were conditions, in the form of shadow and an absent guard, suitable for the adventure.

With feet covered only by a pair of thick socks Fulton climbed through the tiny window, gripped a bend of the drain-pipe, and made use of a metal joint for foothold. Stone, hold-

ing the rope and the boots, watched from the window. Fulton gripped the gutter and was beginning to haul himself up, when—*crunch!*—the top of the flimsy drain-pipe was severed from the roof by his weight, and he fell.

Instinctively he released his feet from the joint on which they had been resting. He thus managed to land on all-fours in the yard, about fifteen feet below.

The noise, however, was startling. Stone and I expected every second that Fulton would be discovered; but with great presence of mind he jumped up and ran into our room, through the near-by door, before anybody had time to investigate.

An upper window opened noisily, and from it a Turkish officer, awakened by the sound of Fulton's fall, yelled to the guards. Within five minutes the yard was full of a disordered commotion. An excited group collected round the portion of the drain-pipe which was lying on the ground.

Meanwhile Fulton and Stone had torn off their outer clothing. When Zikki Bey paid a visit of suspicious inspection, the three of us were seemingly asleep. Soon afterwards the chattering and clattering in the yard subsided. Fortunately a strong wind was blowing; and we heard afterwards that the Turks thought a violent gust must have dislodged the drain-pipe.

With nerves on edge and all our faculties keyed up, there was little sleep for the rest of that night. Our only remaining chance was to escape next morning, when we passed through the city on the way to the railway station.

CHAPTER XII.

A GREEK WAITRESS, A GERMAN BEER-HOUSE, A TURKISH POLICEMAN, AND A RUSSIAN SHIP.

At half-past eleven of a scorching morning every Britisher at Psamatia marched away from the prison-house. As a result of the furore that followed White's escape, twenty-four hours earlier, the Turks were sending us into the interior of Anatolia.

About fifty Tommies, with a detachment of guards, left first; and we — the fifteen officer-prisoners — followed twenty yards behind them. In the rear was the Turkish officer in charge, with a screen of six guards, who showed fixed bayonets, loaded rifles, and smiling ferocity.

Fulton, Stone, and I had made up our minds to slip away, or if needs be dash away, before the party entrained at Haidar Pasha, on the Asiatic shore of the Sea of Marmora. The Turkish officer rather expected somebody to make an attempt, but knew not whom to suspect in particular. A little deduction might have told him, for except F., the "do-or-die trio" — as the others had named us — were the only officers wearing civilian clothes; and one

would as easily have suspected F. of an ambition to become the Sultan's chief eunuch as of an ambition to escape.

Some of the Tommies were disabled or still sick. As they trudged through the hot streets, oppressed by heavy packages and a relentless heat, their backs bent lower and lower, and they began to straggle. One man fainted. While he was being carried into the shade the officers obtained permission to relieve the weakest Tommies of their kits. Once again, the Turks ought to have discovered the escape-gang; for the others saw to it that Fulton, Stone, and I should not be burdened with the parcels.

Meantime, the midday heat grew more intense, and the Tommies more exhausted. It became necessary, every half-mile or so, to rest for a few minutes on the shady side of the street.

The "do-or-die trio" looked to these halts for their opportunity; but the guards always hemmed us in too closely for any chance of a break-away. A combined effort seemed impossible, so that the three of us accepted the maxim of each man for himself. Even to talk with each other on the march was imprudent, for earnest conversation, like earnest looks, must have attracted the guards' attention.

The first move was made by Fulton. We had halted on a narrow pavement, in the suburb of Yeni-kapou. There followed a short interval of lounging repose, during which we sipped at water-bottles, while the Turkish officer did his best to fraternise. Turning round casually in a

search for possible opportunities, I saw Fulton sliding into a little booth of a shop, and then, with head bent over the counter, looking at post-cards. As far as I could gather none of the guards had noticed him. He killed time by calling for more and ever more post-cards.

Five minutes later the order to continue was given. We rose and arranged our packs, while Ms. stood in front of the shop window so as to hide Fulton, But a Turkish sergeant counted us, and finding the number of officers short by one, became excited and aggressive as he wandered around and checked his figures. Fulton's discovery was then inevitable. He made the best of things, when observed through the window, by choosing and paying for several post-cards, and leaving the shop indifferently, as if he had entered it with no ulterior purpose. The Turkish officer looked his suspicion, but made no comments.

Stone's turn came next. At Koum-kapou we rested below the wall of an old palace. When, as he thought, nobody was looking, he slipped through a side-entrance, and sat down against a doorway in the left-hand corner of the court-yard. A guard darted after him and dragged him back to us. The Turkish officer saw the commotion and wanted explanations; whereupon Stone complained that although he went into the courtyard merely to find shelter from the sun, the guard had hustled him rudely. The guard was reprimanded for want of politeness.

We passed from Koum-kapou to Stamboul,

where crowds of be-fezed men and veiled women gathered at every crossing to gaze their dull-eyed curiosity. Here, in the mazed streets of the Turkish quarter, I again petitioned Providence for some sort of a diversion, under cover of which we might run. But nothing happened. The guards surrounded us as if we had been wayward pigs being driven to the slaughter-house, and handled their bayonets suggestively.

At one point we could see the Maritza down a side-turning. We moved along the tram-lines towards the big bridge. Then, after a moment's delay at the toll-gate, we passed over the Golden Horn.

Three-quarters of the way across the bridge the Turkish sergeant leading us switched the column-head to the steps descending to the ferry-stage for the Haidar Pasha steam-boats. The Tommies were placed at one end of the wooden stage, with a separate group of guards; while the Turkish officer, who since the beginning of the journey had shown a desire to make himself pleasant, took the officer-prisoners into a little café for cooling drinks. We talked idly to the Greek waitress who served us; but at the moment I was too preoccupied to notice anything about her, except that she was plump and obliging.

Later, we were grouped some distance to the left of the café, in a corner of the ferry stage opposite that occupied by the Tommies. There we remained for nearly an hour in the broiling sun, while waiting for the steamer which was

to take us from Europe to Asia. People surged on and off the ferry-boats that moored opposite us from time to time, but never once did the guards relax enough to allow anybody to fade into the crowd. The chances were made even more desperate by some German soldiers who leaned over the bridge-rails above us and watched the changing scene.

"Our ship comes," announced the Turkish officer at last, pointing out to sea in the direction of Prinkipo.

In five minutes' time, I knew, the party would be on board that steamer; and once aboard it I should have left behind all hope of escape from captivity in Turkey. Only five minutes! Had the gods left *no* loophole?

I searched among the crowd in every direction, ready to take advantage of the wildest and slimmest scheme that might suggest itself. I heard Pappas Effendi and Fulton asking the Turkish officer if they might return to fetch some kit that had been left in the café. The Turk nodded, and sent them away, escorted by a sergeant. I also had left some kit, I claimed on the spur of the moment, just as Pappas Effendi and Fulton were leaving us.

"All right," said the Turk, "follow your comrades."

In full view of the rest of the party I walked after Pappas Effendi and Fulton. While keeping close to the sergeant, as if to show I was under his wing, I took care to remain behind him, so that he himself should know nothing of my presence. The little group entered the

café, first Pappas Effendi and Fulton, then the sergeant, and finally myself, walking softly.

Inside the doorway was the plump waitress, who smiled affably. I stayed near her while the other three passed to the inside room, where we had been seated earlier. I fingered my lips warningly, and in soft-spoken French asked where I could hide.

The waitress gave no answer, but without showing the least excitement or even surprise, half-opened a folding doorway that led to the kitchen. I planted myself behind it, while she entered the inner room and talked to the Turkish sergeant.

A minute later I heard the three of them—Pappas Effendi, Fulton, and the guard—tramp past my doorway and out to the ferry-stage. Just then the arriving steamer hooted.

"Now," said this waitress-in-a-million, "they have gone, and so must you. The Turks may come back any moment, and if they find you here I shall suffer more than you."

"Good-bye, and a million thanks," I said fervently, and went into the open.

Without even turning my head to see whether the disappearance was known, I swerved to the right, and, taking great care not to attract attention by walking in haste, passed up the long line of steps leading to the bridge.

I continued to look straight ahead; but I could sense the presence, only a few yards away, of the German soldiers who loitered by the railings. Fortunately several other people were moving up or down the steps. Dressed as

I was in a civilian suit obtained from the Dutch Legation, the Germans paid no more attention to me than to them.

I reached the pavement, and still not daring to look behind, crossed the tram-lines to the opposite side of the bridge. Then only did I turn round to find out if I were followed.

Everything was normal. Not one of the idlers who lined the railings had noticed me. The usual traffic and the usual crowds ebbed and flowed across the bridge, the sun shone.

I lit a cigarette and walked eastward. Having crossed the circus of streets beyond the bridge, I turned to the right and made for the Rue de Galata. At the corner I looked back again. To my very great relief I found that I was still not followed.

I was conscious of an intense exhilaration as, free at last, I rubbed elbows with the crowd of nondescript Levantines. It was the first time for months that I had walked the streets without the burden of an oppressive consciousness that a yard or two to the rear was an animal of a Turkish soldier. That sense of always being followed and spied upon and menaced and held on a leash had weighed so much on my mind that I had come to look upon a guard in the same light as an old-time convict must have looked upon the leg-ball chained to his foot. The sense of freedom from this incubus was glorious.

I was worried about my chances of meeting the unknown Russian who had agreed to hide White and myself. According to the plan detailed to me some hours earlier by the Polish

prisoner Vladimir Wilkowsky, he was to wait for me in a German beer-house from two o'clock to four. I had been unable to escape in time for the appointment, and it was now four-twenty.

Nevertheless, hoping that the Russian might have lingered over his drink, I decided to carry out the arrangements as if I had arrived in time. These, I remember thinking as I strolled along the Rue de Galata, studiously unconscious of gendarmes and soldiers, were suggestive of a Deadwood Dick thriller, or of some sawdust melodrama at a provincial theatre.

Having entered the beer-house (named *Zur Neuen Welt*), I was to pass down the main room until, on the right-hand side of it, I reached the piano. I must seat myself at the table next to the piano, order a glass of beer, put a cigarette behind my left ear, and look around without showing too much anxiety.

Somewhere near me I should find a man whose left ear, also, was adorned with a cigarette; or, if not already there, he would arrive very shortly. He would occupy the table beyond mine—that is to say, the next but one to the piano. On no account must I speak to him in the beer-house; although, to make his identity doubly clear, he might ask for a light, speaking in German.

He would remain until I had paid my reckoning, then pay his own, leave the *Zur Neuen Welt*, and walk toward Péra. I was to follow him, not too closely, always taking care to be separated by a distance of at least twenty yards, so that nobody might observe how my movements de-

pended on his. Arrived on the fringe of Péra, he would unlock a door, leave it open, and disappear; whereupon all that remained for me was to follow him inside.

It was four twenty-seven when I entered the *Bierhaus Zur Neune Welt*—a low-roofed, close-atmosphered café in the Rue de Galata. The customers inside it were few. Some of them caught my attention at once, for they included a group of German soldiers and a Turkish officer of gendarmerie who was talking to a civilian. The next table to the piano was vacant, as were those surrounding it. I sat down, casually placed a cigarette behind my left ear, and ordered a glass of Munich beer.

As I sipped the beer I looked around the room for the man of mystery. Nobody paid the least attention to me. Plenty of cigarettes were held in the hand or the mouth, but none in the cleft of the left ear.

Still with a faint hope that the Russian who was to hide me might return, I ordered a second glass of beer, and made a study of every man present, in case one of them might be he. Nothing had happened, and nothing continued to happen. The officer of gendarmerie kept his back towards me, while the German soldiers grew boisterous over repeated relays of beer, and over mandolin strummings by a red-faced Unteroffizier.

The proprietress, a German woman of an especial corpulence, dragged her fleshy body from table to table, and finally anchored her bulk by my chair.

"You seem hot," she said in German. "You must have been walking too fast."

"No, I have merely been out in this atrocious sun."

"German?" she asked—at which I was delighted, for it proved that my accent, acquired years before as a student in Germany, was not yet too rusty to pass muster.

"No, madam, Russian," I replied, hoping hard that she could speak no Russian.

"*So!* Plenty of Russians come here since the Ukraine was occupied, and the boats began to arrive from Odessa."

Now, although the fat proprietress had paid such a compliment to my German accent, I remembered the five years since I had spoken the language continuously, and I feared that in any word she might detect an English accent. I grew more and more frightened and anxious, for it was very unlikely that the man with the cigarette would arrive now. I looked at my watch, and found the time to be five twenty-five.

Finally, the tension of trying to think clearly while answering the German female's questions was more than I could stand. I paid my bill, and returned to the Rue de Galata.

By now, I judged, the guards must have discovered my escape. Probably they were searching the streets for me, and probably the gendarmerie in Galata, Pera, and Stamboul had been instructed to look out for a European in a grey civilian suit and a black hat. I stopped at the nearest outfitting shop, bought a light-grey hat, and left the black one lying on a

chair. Deciding that the water would be safer than the land, I made my way back to the bridge, with the intention of chartering a small boat for a trip up the Bosphorus.

Then, crossing the open space facing the bridge, I was horrified to see Mahmoud, one of my old guards. He revolved undecidedly, and peered among the crowd. Obviously he was looking for some one, and the odds were a hundred to one that the some one must be me. I edged away from him without being observed, and dodged into the fruit bazaar among the quay-side streets beyond the bridge.

This bazaar was one of the dirtiest in Constantinople. Thousands of flies drifted over and settled on the uncovered baskets of dried fruit. The very stalls seemed ready to fall to pieces from decrepitude. The people, vendors and buyers alike, were dusty and ragged. A few loiterers sqatted on the cobbled stones and sucked orange-peel.

It was inevitable that in such a place my more or less smart Legation suit and my newly-bought hat should attract attention. A policeman seemed particularly interested in them. I was leaving the bazaar by a narrow street that looked as if it might lead me to the subway station of Galata, when he barred the way and said something in Turkish, while holding out his hand expectantly.

I failed to understand most of the words; but one of them—*vécika*—was enough. *Vécikas* were the Turkish passports with which every honest, or rich but dishonest, civilian had to

provide himself, if he wished to remain at liberty. They might be demanded at any time in any place by any gendarme.

Naturally I could produce no *vécika*. But I had the next best thing. That same morning I had discussed with Vladimir Wilkowsky the possibility of being stopped in the street by a policeman. His advice was that if it happened I must claim to be a German officer. I remembered being photographed in civilian clothes when at Gumuch Souyou hospital; and before leaving Psamatia I gave myself a useful identity by signing one of the copies with a German name.

After searching an inside pocket, I now handed to the gendarme a photograph which went to prove that I was "*Fritz Richter, Oberleutnant in der Fliegertruppen.*" Speaking in fluent German, interspersed with a few words of broken Turkish, I protested violently that I was a German officer in mufti, and that he would get himself into trouble for having presumed to stop a German officer. And never was I more frightened than when uttering that bombast.

Half-convinced and half-browbeaten, the gendarme took the photograph, looked at it dubiously, and consulted a Greek from among the curious crowd that circled us. This man, it appeared, claimed to know German. I understood little of the conversation, but as far as I could gather the policeman asked if I really was a German officer, and the Greek, reading the signature laboriously, informed him that it proclaimed me to be a Supreme Lieutenant of Flying Soldiers.

"*Pek ée, effendim,*" said the gendarme to me. He returned the photograph, saluted and apologised. He then went away. So did I.

I returned cautiously, through a combination of side-streets, to the bridge-head, and was relieved to find that Mahmoud had disappeared. From the quay I chartered a rowing-boat, and ordered the Turkish *kaiktche* to row me up the Bosphorus.

"Are you Russian, *effendim?*" he asked.

"No, German." At that his advances ended.

The train of thought started by the word Russian led me to decide that I had better spend the night aboard the Russian tramp steamer on which White and I were to travel as stowaways. Vladimir Wilkowsky, in fact, had told me to make for it if I failed to reach the hiding-place on shore, and to ask for M. Titoff, the chief engineer. Its name was the *Batoum*, and most of its officers were in the conspiracy to help us, in return for substantial payment. I had been told that the ship was moored in the Bosphorus, but of its appearance or exact position I knew nothing.

"*Russky dampfschiff Batoum,*" I ordered the *kaiktche*, using the polyglot mixture which he was most likely to understand. But his voluble jabbering and his expressive shrug showed that he also was ignorant of where it lay.

"*Bosphor!*" I commanded, pointing higher up the Bosphorus, and thinking that I would find the name *Batoum* painted on one of the five or six ships that I could see in the distance, moored in mid-stream.

Having rowed up the Bosphorus and already

passed Dolma Bagtché Palace, I found no ship labelled *Batoum*. Most of the craft seemed to use only numbers as distinguishing marks. What was worse, the majority flew the German flag; although two of the masts sported a yellow and blue standard, which I failed to recognise. Certainly none flew the Russian eagle.

Our only chance of finding the *Batoum* was to ask directions. We visited several lighters near the quay, but the *kaiktché's* questions to Turks and Greeks were unproductive. As a last chance I told him to row close to a large steamer, on the deck of which I could see some German sailors.

"Please tell me where I can find the Russian boat *Batoum*," I shouted in German, standing up while the *kaiktche* kept the little craft steady with his oars.

"Don't know the *Batoum*," said a sailor. "There are no Russian ships now. They've become German or Austrian."

"And those two over there?" I asked, pointing towards the vessels with the yellow and blue ensigns.

"Ukrainian."

"Thanks very much," I called as we sheered off. My mistake, I realised, had been in forgetting for the moment the existence of that newly-made-in-Germany republic the Ukraine. Any vessel from Odessa not flying the German or Austrian flag would now be Ukrainian; and the yellow and blue standard must be that of the Ukrainian Republic. One of the pair flying this flag proclaimed itself to be the *Nikolaieff*. It followed that the other, which was marked only by a number, must be the *Batoum*.

Having made the *kaiktche* take me to the bottom of its gangway, I climbed to the deck. At the top of the gangway was a tall man, made noticeable by a bristling moustache and a well-pressed uniform of white drill. Obviously he was a ship's officer, and as such he must be one of the syndicate whom Captain White and I were bribing. If so, he would know of Wilkowsky.

"*Russky vapor Batoum?*" I asked in pidgin-Russian.

"*Da.*"

"M. Titoff?"—pointing at him by way of inquiry into his identity.

"*Niet. M. Belaef.*"

"*Droug Vladimir Ivanovitch Wilkowsky?*"

He gave me a long look, smiled, and said under his breath, "Yes, meester."

These were almost the only English words known by Ivan Michaelovitch Belaef, first mate of the Ukrainian tramp steamer *Batoum* from Odessa. And for the moment, at any rate, I was among friends.

. . . . . .

At about armistice-time I was hailed unexpectedly in Port Said by one of the British officers whom I had left behind on the ferry stage of the Golden Horn. He himself had seen me leave the café, climb the steps leading to the bridge, and fade into the crowd.

A few moments after my disappearance, he related, the Turkish officer called the roll of the prisoners before taking them to the ferry-boat. That roll-call almost led to the premature discovery of my escape; for when the Turk said "A-lan Thôm-as Bott," *four* people answered.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FACE AT THE WINDOW.

"M. TITOFF," announced the first mate, entering his cabin with a hunched-up figure of a man whose most obvious characteristics were shifty eyes, very high cheek-bones, and a shrivelled yellow skin.

M. Titoff and I inspected each other with care as I rose from the only chair and shook hands. He, I knew, was the guiding spirit in the syndicate of mates and engineers whom we were bribing.

He produced a book of English phrases, with their Russian equivalents. Opening it at a prepared page he ran his finger down the list and said—"Seegnal!"

"Signal?"

"Yess, ceegarette seegnal."

Remembering the arrangements for the beer-house rendezvous, I placed a cigarette behind my left ear; whereat the chief engineer and the first mate smiled and shook hands once again. Neither of them could speak any language but Russian, so that we talked with difficulty, exchanging half-understood patter from the phrase-book.

After some strumming on the mandolin and

balalaika by Titoff and Belaef, I slept on the first mate's couch, with my money tucked next to my skin. Next morning I was introduced to the third mate, a stocky Lett who could speak German. Using him as interpreter Titoff explained his arrangements. I was to dress myself as a Russian sailor, leave the *Batoum*, and be led to the hiding-place in Pera. White and I were to remain there for a week, until the day before the ship sailed. We could then be concealed on board the *Batoum* until she was safely out of the Bosphorus.

Wearing some old clothes belonging to Kulman, the third mate, but with their rank badges removed, I rowed ashore. Kulman accompanied me, while Titoff, prominent in white drill, waited on the quay. Neither he nor the white-bearded old man to whom he was talking took the least notice of us, but turned and passed towards the Rue de Galata. The third mate and I followed, without, however, showing apparent concern in their movements.

At the corner on a side-street of the far side of the Rue de Galata Titoff separated from his companion. Kulman followed suit by leaving me, after giving instructions that I must follow the old man.

The stranger led the way up the hill toward Pera, while I kept behind him at a convenient distance, on the opposite side of the road. For a quarter of an hour he moved through a succession of uneven streets and cobbled alleys, so that I soon lost my bearings. I was not conscious of the least danger, however. In the

faded old uniform of a sailor, and with my civilian clothes wrapped in a newspaper, I attracted little attention. Occasionally I looked into shop windows to divert the suspicions of any who might otherwise have noticed that I was following the ancient.

The guide halted among the wooden houses on the outskirts of Pera, produced an enormous key, and unlocked an iron door. I slackened my steps as he disappeared inside, but passed through the door a few seconds later.

Inside was half-darkness. Besides the old man I could see, dimly, an unkempt and unshaven figure, wearing an overcoat that was much too small for him. I looked at this apparition with puzzled doubt. Surely it could not be White, whom I had last seen running through the streets of Koum-kapou in a perfectly respectable suit of Red Cross clothes? Yes, it must be, for it came towards me with outstretched hand.

"Glad to see you, old man," said the figure in the overcoat. "I don't know which of us looks the more comic."

"Why the dyed moustache, and why this?" pointing to a faded fez which protruded from one of his pockets.

While the guard was chasing him in Koum-kapou, White related, he turned the corner suddenly and saw an open doorway. He rushed into it, acting on impulse. Just inside the door was a woman, who screamed. He put his hand over her mouth, then dodged down a narrow passage into the back room, while the pursuing guard raced past the house and up the street.

Very fortunately for White the woman was a Greek, and as such well disposed to the British. She hid him in a cupboard for an hour, and persuaded her husband, when he arrived home at midday, to provide a disguise.

White bought a fez and an overcoat, and blackened his moustache. The Greek was shorter and slighter than he, so that it was impossible to wear the overcoat without removing his own jacket and waistcoat. These he left in the house. The result, however, justified his loss, for when he left the Greeks late in the afternoon, he was a perfect study of a broken-down Levantine.

He arrived too late for the beer-house rendezvous at Galata, and after waiting vainly for half an hour, was obliged to spend the evening and night as best he could. As he wandered along the Rue de Galata a policeman stopped him and, according to the Near East habit, showed a cigarette without saying a word, and signed that he wanted a light. This White supplied from the cigarette he was smoking. The gendarme passed on, without deigning to thank the wretched-looking man in a faded fez and torn coat.

A café, a cinema, and a visit to Pera cemetery filled his evening. Afterwards, unable to hire a room at any hotel because he had no *vécika*, he spent the night in a low-class lodging-house. Next day he met Titoff's Russian friend in the German beer-house, according to plan; and so to the hiding-place.

This hiding-place of ours was a disused workshop belonging to the Russian, who claimed to

be a carpenter. Its only furniture was a crude bench and a long table, The floor lay inches deep in shavings, through which the rats rustled all night and most of the day. There was one small window; but this we were told to keep covered by its iron shutter, in case somebody should look in from the street. A tiny yard led from the corner opposite the door to the bottom of a shaft, down which the dwellers on the upper floors of the building threw their rubbish.

In themselves these conditions were fairly bad; for apart from the lack of furniture, the atmosphere was always dusty and unpleasantly musty, and unless we opened the window the workshop remained in perpetual twilight.

But the worst drawback of all was that only a flimsy partition separated us from the living-room of a Turkish officer. His bedroom was above our wooden ceiling. Everything he did we could hear quite plainly, whether he coughed, spoke, whistled, removed his boots, or snored.

The Turkish officer, we realised, must likewise hear every movement of ours; so that whenever either he or his orderly or anybody else was in his rooms we maintained a death-like stillness. We scarcely dared to whisper, or to tiptoe across the workshop on bootless feet. In the daytime the striking of a match had to be masked by scraping the shavings, to make a noise like a rat. After daylight smoking was impossible, because the glimmer would have shown through the many cracks in the partition.

We slept side by side on the wooden table, with

rolled-up coats as pillows. White once woke up in the middle of the night and was horrified to hear me talking in my sleep. Very fortunately the Turk above was not awake, and so missed the performance. Afterwards we never slept at the same time, but kept watch in turn, in case one of us should snore or otherwise attract attention. Four of our nights in the workshop were broken into by machine-gun fire from a near-by roof, during British air-raids.

On my arrival White had told me that we must be particularly careful in the mornings, just after the Turkish officer left the house. The noises from the living-room then suggested that somebody, probably the Turk's wife, was tidying it. This happened on three successive mornings. What worried us in particular was a scrunching and scraping behind the partition, which suggested that the wife suspected our presence and tried to look at us through the cracks. Each time this occurred we crouched at the bottom of the partition, fingered our lips warningly, and scarcely breathed. On the fourth day, when the Russian brought our food, we told him our suspicions.

"We believe this Turkish officer's wife knows of us," said White. "Every morning she comes to the partition and seems to be looking through it,"

The carpenter grinned.

"But," he explained, "the Turk has no wife. What you've been frightened of is his tame rabbit!"

Each day we hoped for news of the *Batoum's*

date of sailing. Three times it was postponed; and, bored and wretched, we remained in the miserable workshop.

Unable to keep our minds as inactive as our bodies, we took the risk of leaving the window half-open during the daytime, so that we might study our Russian text-books, in readiness for Odessa. Seated on the shavings, in a position to catch the shaft of light that streamed through the narrow panes, we passed many hours with the copying and learning of Russian phrases.

When, after hours of study, our concentrative faculties became stale, the only alternative was to hope for success, and to live again in retrospect the extravagant happenings of the past few weeks. Most of the business usually associated with the crudest melodrama had been there, I reflected—spies, policemen, disguises, chases, female accomplices, and bluff. Decidedly it had been thrilling; but for the future I desired intensely to experience such thrills only at second-hand.

But even in this secluded room we were not to be spared the atmosphere of movie-horrifics. Another stock thrill was inflicted on us — the Face at the Window.

There had seemed no likelihood of discovery from the street. Even if we bared the window from its iron shutter nobody could see into the room without raising himself on the ledge, for the lower panes were coated with an opaque glaze. At meal-times, therefore, we let in the daylight by withdrawing the shutter.

One morning, after breakfast, when the Turkish

officer had left his rooms, I saw White stiffen suddenly as we cleared the table.

"Look natural," he whispered, "there's no time to duck."

I picked up a plank of wood and tried to appear as if my business were carpentry; for over there, four yards away, a fez was rising slowly above the glazed portion of the window. White performed convincingly with a tape-measure, the nearest thing to his hand.

The fez was the forerunner of a much-wrinkled forehead. Then came a pair of villainous eyes, a bent nose, and cheek-bones with light olive skin drawn tightly across them. The rest of the face remained hidden by the glaze. The Turk—for such he evidently was—must have levered himself from the ground by means of the window ledge.

"Don't take any notice of the swine," White murmured.

Outwardly calm, but inwardly nervous and shaking, I pretended to busy myself with the carpenter's tools; although it was difficult to withstand a shocked instinct to gaze at the face. It remained for about two minutes of heart-throbbing tension, then disappeared and left me gasping with the surprise and the shock of its visit. We heard somebody walking away from the building and down the hill towards Galata.

The Face might have belonged to a police spy, we speculated, but it might have been that of a casual passer-by who was indulging the curiosity in respect of other people's business which is

common to most Turks. In that case no harm would be done, for the stranger had seen nothing suspicious — only a workshop, some tools and planks, a loaf of bread and a half-melon on the table, and two coatless, collarless, unshaven, untidy-haired men, who seemed to be working.

The carpenter showed fright on being told that a Turk had looked in at us, and said he must consult Titoff. Before he returned on the following morning the Face had again appeared, as before—first a fez rising slowly above the glazed pane, then a wrinkled forehead, then the villainous eyes and the crooked nose. It remained staring for a few seconds, and disappeared.

This time the Russian could contain neither his fear nor his impatience to get us out of the workshop. If we were caught, said he, it would only mean imprisonment for us; but him the Turks might hang as a spy. He told us to pack our belongings, while he went to the *Batoum* and arranged with Titoff for us to be taken on board.

An hour later a procession of three passed through the winding streets towards the quay. We left the workshop in turn, at intervals of a few seconds; for we had decided to walk separately, so that if one of us were stopped the others could make themselves scarce. First went the carpenter, leading the way down the hill to Galata. I followed, twenty yards behind him, still dressed as a Russian sailor; and about twenty yards behind me came White, in his fez and old overcoat. We scarcely looked at each other, but mooched along different sections of the road.

Each was ready, at a second's warning, to run down the nearest alley.

Until the Rue de Galata was reached the only people we saw were the dull-eyed and ragged inhabitants of the slum quarter that fringes Pera, sitting in their doorways and blinking in the heat of early afternoon. But when we crossed the Rue de Galata White almost rubbed shoulders with a couple of gendarmes.

Titoff was waiting on the quayside. White and I approached him, whereupon the Russian carpenter retraced his steps and left us. In my character of a Russian seaman I saluted the *Batoum's* chief engineer. He hustled us into a waiting *kaik*, and ordered the *kaiktche* to row to the *Batoum*.

Kulman was waiting at the top of the gangway. He led us to his cabin, where, he said, we were to live for the present.

The cabin door was kept closed all day long, to prevent discovery by the captain. In the heat of those August days on the Bosphorus the stifling stuffiness of the unventilated little room became almost unbearable. Yet we had one consolation. The port-hole could be left open without fear of intrusion by the Face, with its wrinkled forehead surmounted by a fez, its villainous eyes, its crooked nose, and its olive skin drawn tightly across the cheek-bones; and only at early morning did I see it, in the half-tones of the period between sleeping and waking.

CHAPTER XIV.

A SHIPLOAD OF ROGUES.

MICHAEL IVANOVITCH TITOFF, one-time chief engineer of the tramp steamer *Batoum*, proved to the dissatisfaction of Captain White and myself that he was a thief, a mean backguard, a cunning liar, a cringing coward, a rat, and an altogether despicable cheat. Otherwise he was not a bad sort of fellow.

At the time when we lived on board the *Batoum* as stowaways her officers and crew were rogues almost to a man. Yet, except Titoff and one or two of the crew, they were likeable rogues, and applied an instinctive sense of decency to their unlawful dealings.

For example, Andreas Kulman, the Lettish third mate, would cheerfully cheat the Turkish merchant who had chartered the vessel, and cheerfully smuggled drugs from anywhere to anywhere; but I never knew him cheat a friend or a poor man, or take advantage of a stranger in difficulties. To us, as prisoners escaping from Turkey, he showed many kindnesses; and if we had been without money he would have been willing to take us across the Black Sea without

payment. The other mates were of the same type, if a trifle less obliging.

The second and third engineers—Feodor Mozny and Josef Koratkov—were among the few of our shipmates who could not be classified as rogues. They transgressed only to the innocuous extent of smuggling moneyed stowaways and contraband goods. They showed disinterested goodwill towards White and me, as did the second engineer's wife, who voyaged with her husband. Several evenings she spent in the heat of the frowsy little engine-room, washing our only underclothes, while we sat in Josef's cabin, clad in nothing but the tunic and trousers of our Russian-sailor disguises.

We wore these disguises for the benefit of visitors to the *Batoum*, and not to throw dust in the eyes of the crew. That was needless, for, except the captain, every man belonging to the ship soon knew of us. The marvel was that with so many people privy to the secret it never leaked to the Turkish police. In pro-Entente circles ashore our presence on the *Batoum* was widely known and widely discussed; and I count it a debt to Providence that the news was not carried to the Ministry of War by one of the city's many police spies.

The crew were unlikely to betray us knowingly, for every man of them must have been concerned in something which might wither in the strong light of a police investigation. Besides, they were tolerant of the British, while disliking the Turks even more than they disliked the Germans. The danger from them was that they got drunk

ashore and often brought women friends to the boat.

The captain—a white-bearded, bent-backed Greek of about eighty—seemed incompetent and well on the way to senile decay, but withal harmless. This voyage was to be his last before enforced retirement. He was as wax in the cunning hands of Titoff, who kept him from the knowledge that two escaped Britishers were aboard. Had he known he would have either insisted on our removal, or—more probably—demanded a large share of the passage-money. It was easy to keep the ancient in ignorance, for apparently he knew less than anybody else of what happened on his vessel. Titoff assured us that should the captain see us in our disguise of Russian sailors he would remain unsuspicious if we took care not to speak. His declining mind had become too feeble to remember off-hand even the number of the crew; and much less could he remember their faces. Once I brushed by him closely, outside Kulman's cabin. He passed without a glance at me, looking on the ground and muttering into his beard.

The crew were a dubious mixture. Many—in particular the firemen—had been Bolsheviks until Austro-German forces landed at Odessa and Sevastopol, and temporarily crushed Bolshevism in South Russia. Others, ex-members of the *bourgeoisie* who were unable to make a living on land under present conditions, had become temporary seamen by the grace of friends connected with the shipping company that owned the *Batoum*. There was also a bright youth

named Viktor, who, until the Bolshevik rising, had been a student. His father was killed in the rioting at Kieff that accompanied the Soviet rise to power; and the son, to keep himself alive, now swabbed the decks of a tramp steamer, and submitted to being kicked by sailors and corrupted by Michael Ivanovitch Titoff. Viktor spoke French and German, and was therefore much in request as interpreter when the ship's officers bargained with their stowaways or invested in contraband consignments, or when one of them brought on board some cosmopolitan wench from Pera or Galata.

Our most interesting shipmate on the *Batoum* was, perhaps, Bolshevik Bill, the greaser. One afternoon, when White, dressed in sailor's clothes, was helping to paint the ship's side, a hard-faced giant in overalls approached him, produced a Russian-French grammar, and asked for a lesson. So far as his slight knowledge of French and slighter knowledge of Russian allowed, White did his best to comply. Thereafter the greaser became a close friend, following us round the deck in the evening, visiting us at odd hours during the daytime, and bringing us figs. Like most of the firemen, he was a Bolshevik. According to his own limited and crude conceptions of universal equality, he wanted plenty of wealth, plenty of happiness, plenty of vodka for all. He was especially eloquent and brotherly when drunk.

Others of the Bolsheviks were idealists of a more exterminative type. Once, when White was playing cards with some firemen in the

engine-room, the talk swung to the Russian revolution. A lean man, who until then had been too busy drinking to speak, began to describe the mutiny in the Baltic fleet, in which he had been a sailor. In his intensity he seemed again to live through the horrors of it, as with gloating gesture he told how some of the unpopular officers had been thrown into the sea, with weights tied to their feet.

"That was bad, very bad," protested White in his halting Russian. "If you are in power, and somebody has done wrong, he should be given a fair trial, and, if convicted, put in prison. But to kill men merely because you dislike them is very wrong."

"Well said," commented Bolshevik Bill, the greaser.

"No; well meant, if you like," amended the lean fireman, as he patted White on the back; "but the Meester does not understand us. We would never do such a thing to English officers. We had them as instructors, and found them true friends of their men. Our officers were very different. They hit us and ignored us and treated us like animals. We shall never be permanently free until they are all dead. We must destroy their class. Russia . . ."

His voice had been growing louder and more raucous. Suddenly it softened as he turned to White and said: "Meester, you know your business, and we know ours. Have a fig." And the game of cards continued.

Yet, among the whole shipload of rogues, the only man who victimised us was Titoff,

the chief engineer. When we first came aboard he demanded four pounds Turkish a day for food; which, being stolen from the ship's supplies, cost him nothing. At the instigation of the second and third engineers we reduced the payment to one and a half pounds Turkish a day. He blustered, but gave way, and tried to make up the difference by cheating us over tobacco, cigarettes, newspapers, and other articles bought on shore.

We had left at Psamatia a store of clothes and tinned food, which was to have been smuggled on board by Vladimir Wilkowsky. As the days passed and nothing arrived, we suspected Wilkowsky of having either failed or fooled us. Then, at a party in Titoff's cabin one evening, I saw inside a cupboard some tins of biscuits and cocoa of the kind that were sent to aviator prisoners in Turkey by the British Flying Services Fund. Titoff could not—and in any case certainly would not—have bought them in Constantinople; for English cocoa and biscuits, if obtainable at all in the shops of Pera, fetched impossible prices.

Although the mere sight of the tins provided insufficient proof, the inference was that Wilkowsky had sent our belongings, and that Titoff had stolen them. We delayed investigation and accusation until we should be safely out of Turkey, and in the possession of revolvers. Some time or other we meant to make Titoff suffer. Meanwhile we were forced to wait until our moment came.

Delay followed upon heart-breaking delay,

until we began to lose hope that the *Batoum* would ever weigh anchor. In four days' time, it was promised, the cargo would arrive. Two days later the four days had stretched, elastic-wise, to ten, because a consignment of figs had not arrived from the interior. Then, a week afterwards, a further extension of five days was reported, the Turkish merchant having failed to come to terms with the Ministry of Commerce.

It became impossible for us to remain in Kulman's cabin, which faced the captain's. The old skipper received many visitors, including Turkish officials, any one of whom might have been led by mischance to discover us. At Titoff's suggestion we moved to a small room on the bridge, formerly occupied by a wireless operator, in the days when the *Batoum* was a Russian transport. The transmitter and receiver were still there, but had been out of action long since, for the Germans forbade the use of wireless by merchant craft in the Black Sea.

There we remained hidden for a succession of twelve monotonous days and nights, made bearable only by British air-raids and by expeditions to the deck when sunset and twilight were past, and we could take exercise by tramping backwards and forwards in the shadow. For the rest, we continued to study Russian, and received friendly calls from Kulman, Josef, Feodor, Viktor, and Bolshevik Bill, the greaser.

Titoff visited us once only, when he searched for the platinum points on the Marconi transmitter. But already every morsel of platinum had been removed; and the chief engineer

seemed disgusted that somebody else should have anticipated his latest idea for profitable villainy.

The tedium of inactive waiting, of day-to-day hopes and disappointments, was as unpleasant and irritating as a blanket of damp horse-hair. Our only diversion was the kaleidoscopic view from the window, as the ship swung with the tides. Not fifty yards away the Sultan's summer palace stood in white-stoned prominence amid the dull squat buildings of Galata. Looking across the Bosphorus, with its heavy *dhows*, its ferry-boats, its dancing *kaiks*, and its sun-glittering wavelets, we could see Seraglio Point, and in the distance the domed roofs and minaret spires of the great mosques of Stamboul.

Meals were served irregularly, for journeys from the kitchen to the wireless cabin were dependent upon the outgoings and incomings of the captain and his visitors. Whenever he or they came on the bridge, we made fast the door and crouched beneath the window.

Our supply of money continued to dwindle, until it was insufficient to pay the four hundred Turkish pounds which Titoff demanded as passage-money. We hesitated to approach Mr S. once more, not wishing to involve him in our danger. Yet we had no other method of obtaining funds. Driven to the distasteful course by urgent necessity, we decided to compromise by communicating with him through intermediaries, instead of visiting his office ourselves.

Titoff was anxious to be employed as messenger; but we shrank from placing him in a

position which he might misuse to blackmail Mr S. We therefore resumed communication with Theodore, the Greek waiter, by sending him an envelope that contained instructions for himself and a sealed letter for Mr S. When Titoff went ashore to deliver the envelope to Theodore, Kulman accompanied him, as a check on his propensity to walk crookedly.

The pair returned with the welcome news that Mr S. would cash our cheques in three days' time.

Meantime the stowaway syndicate had been offered new business. Fulton and Stone had appeared once again upon the escape-horizon, and were living in Theodore's house. Yeats-Brown, in his disguise, was paying them frequent visits. Theodore had approached Titoff with a proposition that on the night before the *Batoum* sailed the three of them should join us.

The chief engineer and his partners rather shied at the increased risk; but the money offered was too much for them, and they agreed to take Yeats-Brown, Fulton, and Stone.

And then, with the prospect before us of sufficient funds and three useful companions, we suffered yet another disappointment. At the time appointed for a rendezvous Titoff went to fetch the money which Mr S. was to send by Theodore. He returned with an anxious face and the announcement that the Greek waiter had disappeared. He had waited vainly for over an hour in the Maritza restaurant, where the other waiters professed to know nothing of Theodore's whereabouts.

It now seemed that not only should we be unable to pay for our passage, but that we had lost the money paid by Mr S. (so we surmised) in exchange for our cheques. Somewhere, we felt sure, there was roguery. Three likely and unpleasant possibilities loomed before us. Theodore might have stolen the money and then vanished; Titoff might have stolen it; they might have stolen it jointly. Our one legitimate hope was that Mr S. might not have cashed the cheques before Theodore's disappearance.

Our only chance of discovering the truth was personal investigation. On the following afternoon, White, again wearing his fez and old overcoat, and with his moustache darkened, rowed ashore. He took the tram to the foot of the Golden Horn bridge, walked across to Stamboul, and entered the Maritza. The low-roofed restaurant's appearance was as usual; but somehow the atmosphere seemed electric with suspicion. A Turkish officer of gendarmerie sat at a table near the door. Theodore was conspicuously absent.

White ordered a glass of beer, and while doing so asked for news of him. The waiter looked nervous, and left the table without a reply. When he returned White repeated the question. He was told—

"He has fallen with the three British officers. I pray you not to talk of it."

"But I must know," urged White, speaking in low-toned, halting French. "I am a British officer myself"—for this waiter, also, had acted as an intermediary for prisoners. The admission

frightened him badly, and he took care to keep away from the neighbourhood of White's table.

Glancing round, White saw a Turk washing his hands in the little basin at the back of the room, while looking, slantwise but intently, at each man present in turn, but more particularly at the proprietor and the waiters.

After White's return to the *Batoum* with the bad news, we all but gave up hope of recovering the four hundred Turkish pounds; for the police would most certainly have taken whatever monies were found on Theodore. We had also to reckon with the new danger that bastinado-floggings might persuade the Greek into betraying us.

Next morning's issue of the 'Lloyd Ottoman' brought detailed confirmation. Three British officers, said a *faits divers* paragraph, had been concealed in the house of one Theodore Yanni, a Greek waiter employed at a restaurant in Stamboul. The police surrounded the building, and discovered them. They were taken to the Ministry of War prison with Theodore, his two sisters, and his old mother.

The Ministry of War prison—"The Black Hole of Constantinople!" We could see the Ministry of War in the distance from the bridge of the *Batoum*, and knowing the horrors of its special punishment cells, we shuddered with sympathy for the strangely mixed party. Theodore himself, we supposed, would be hanged out of hand.

Our almost hopeless position forced us into the reckless decision to discover the truth by

paying a personal visit to Mr S. His office was in the Prisoners of War department of the Dutch Legation, where he helped to administer the British Red Cross funds.

The building was on the way to the Petits Champs Gardens, near the Pera Palace Hotel; and there I went, in my sailor's uniform, with Kulman as companion. At the door was a multi-lingual porter, whom I had seen when, before my escape, I once bribed a guard into letting me visit the Prisoners' Bureau.

I hung back and allowed Kulman to take the lead, for I feared that, despite the Russian uniform, the porter might recognise me by certain scars on my face, the legacy of an aeroplane crash. Fortunately he could talk Russian. In answer to Kulman, he said that Mr S. was out for the rest of the day. We left, therefore, and passed the afternoon in various cafés, where Kulman introduced me to friends as a German-speaking Lett.

Next afternoon, before starting for Pera, I was careful to make the tell-tale scars less evident by means of chalk and powder. This time we found that Mr S. was in the Dutch Legation Annexe, although engaged and busy. We walked up the stairway to the first floor, and stood in the corridor outside Mr S.'s office.

Only then did I realise the foolhardiness of the visit. Very much in evidence were two officials whom I had met as a prisoner; and I was forced to shrink behind Kulman when there passed a Jewish *kavass* who knew me well, from having brought clothes and money

when I was a hospital patient. He went by with only a casual glance at the two men in sailors' uniform.

We remained in the passage twenty minutes, and still the man with whom Mr S. was closeted remained in the office. Twice, speaking in French, I made application to the lady-secretary of Mr S.; but already before we arrived three people had been waiting to see him, and I was told that we must wait our turn. Kulman became anxious and fidgety, especially when, looking down the stairs, he saw some Turks in the hall.

Standing near us in the corridor were two elderly Jews, who appeared to listen intently when Kulman thought fit to emphasise the uniform by addressing me in Russian. Presently one of them produced an unlighted cigarette, and, also speaking in Russian, asked me for a match. Without a word I complied; while Kulman forestalled suspicion, which would have arisen if the Jew had begun to question me, by himself beginning a conversation. I avoided taking part in it by again visiting the lady-secretary. Later, Kulman drew me aside and said that it was impossible to remain any longer with the two Russian-speaking Jews.

His nerves—and mine also, for that matter—became still more shaky when, as we passed through the hall doorway, the porter stared hard at me, and then followed us with his eyes until we turned into a side-street that took us out of sight.

Although I had failed for the moment to

reach Mr S., it was imperative that one of us should see him. A new method of approach was advisable, for I believed that the porter half-thought he recognised me. If I returned he would be more than ever suspicious of the scars, for everybody in the Prisoners of War Bureau had heard of my escape. The only alternative was for White to go. His disguise as a Turk would be useless, as most people at the Legation spoke Turkish well, whereas he spoke it indifferently, with an accent that reeked of English vowel-sounds. We canvassed various nationalities and *rôles*, and agreed that he must accuse himself of being one of the American missionaries who were still at liberty in Turkey.

Wearing my suit of mufti and the felt hat which I bought on the day I escaped, White shook hands and left me, after a reminder that if he were captured my clothes would go to prison with him. He was far from cheerful, for it was Friday, the thirteenth of September; and he remenbered that his capture in Mesopotamia had taken place on Friday, the thirteenth of September 1915.

Anxiously and uncomfortably I waited through several hours of strained inactivity, fearing that if White also were recognised at the Prisoners' Bureau, disaster might overtake not only him, but our benefactor Mr S.

At six o'clock he burst into the wireless cabin with a beaming face and the joyous announcement—

"I've seen S., and the money's not lost."

White's Friday, the thirteenth of September,

had been an exciting one. He walked into the doorway of the Prisoners of War Bureau, and, speaking in English, asked for Mr S.

"Name?" inquired the porter.

"Mr Henry O'Neill, from Tarsus."

"Do you know Mr S.?"

"Why, certainly. I'm a friend of his." And White felt in his waistcoat pocket, as if searching for a card.

"His office is on the first floor," said the porter, satisfied. "Go straight up."

With a gulp of relief White passed up the stairway. Like myself on the day before, he had to wait many minutes before Mr S. was disengaged: and like myself, he was horrified to see Levy, the Jewish *kavass* who had brought his letters and parcels to Gumuch Souyou Hospital. The *kavass* beamed and delivered himself of an oily greeting, but failed to remember where he had met White.

"You speak as an Englishman," he said, after a few words of conversation.

"Of course I'm English," admitted White, slapping Levy on the back.

"Are you alone?"

"No, my guard's waiting outside."

The *kavass* fetched a chair for White, and seemed disposed to ask more troublesome questions. Just then the visitor who had been engaged with Mr S. left the office, and White walked inside, praying that the *kavass* and the porter would not compare notes and identify Mr Henry O'Neill of Tarsus with the British prisoner whose guard was waiting in the street.

The door being closed, White explained his real identity to Mr S., and offered apologies for the dangerous visit to which he had been forced by our desperate situation.

"You needn't worry about the money," said Mr S.; "I had no chance of paying it. I've destroyed the cheques."

He went on to relate how that, not wishing to trust the Greek waiter with a large sum, he had sent a clerk to pay the bank-notes into the hands of Titoff, at the Maritza. The clerk visited the little restaurant on the afternoon when Titoff waited in vain for Theodore. He dared not deliver the money there and then, for a Turk appeared to be watching the Russian engineer. When Titoff tired of waiting and went into the street, the Turk followed and shadowed him. The clerk, in his turn, trailed the Turkish agent. The three of them travelled in the same subway car from Galata to Pera. Titoff passed into Taxim Gardens. So did the agent and the clerk. He sat down and ordered a drink near the band-stand. The agent chose a table near him, and the clerk stationed himself within sight of both. At last, giving up hope of an opportunity to speak with Titoff, the clerk returned to Mr S. and gave back the money.

Mr S., meanwhile, had heard of the capture of Yeats-Brown, Fulton, and Stone, all of whom he had helped. He realised that he himself was in grave danger.

"I've had some sleepless nights over those fellows," he said to White. "I rather think I've been watched since they were taken with

Theodore, and I know your friend Titoff's watched. If Theodore blabs in prison, my neck will be almost as near the noose as his."

Mr S., very rightly, was unwilling to advance us money for the present.

"The police want you badly," he pointed out," "and I'm probably a suspect already over Yeats-Brown and Company. If you're grabbed in Constantinople I want to be able to say with a clear conscience that I've given you no cash since you escaped. I shall know when the *Batoum* is due to leave, and do my best to help you on the day before she sails, when you're all but out of the wood. The difficulty will be in finding a messenger. An English lady[1] helped the fellows who were retaken, and she'd like to take you the money. But she's involved over them, and the police are watching her."

Deeply appreciative of the great risks which Mr S. was taking on behalf of not only us, but every prisoner who had tried to escape from Constantinople, White thanked him and left. At the top of the stairs he said good-bye to the *kavass* who knew him as a prisoner. At the front door he nodded to the porter who knew him as Mr Henry O'Neill of Tarsus. And so back to his *rôle* of paying guest on the *Batoum*.

With eased minds and renewed hope we continued to live in our wireless cabin, and prayed to Allah that the *Batoum* would sail soon, and that Mr S. would find some means

[1] Miss Whitaker.

of sending the money. Away in the distance we could see the citadel of the Turkish Ministry of War, in which Yeats-Brown, Fulton, and Stone were dungeoned. All Constantinople talked of the capture, and word went round the cafés that Theodore was to be hanged as a traitor for having helped enemy prisoners to escape.

Thereupon Titoff, mortally afraid for his own neck, wanted to get rid of White and me. He made our shortage of ready money an excuse for ordering us ashore; but we claimed to have grown too fond of him to part company, and said that if we did leave the ship it would be to give ourselves up to the police, with the request that our friend and colleague Michael Ivanovitch Titoff should join us in prison. Michael Ivanovitch then protested, out of the kindness of his heart, that he would take us to Odessa whether we paid the full amount or only part of it.

So the anxious days passed, until at last the sickening period of delay ended with the arrival of a consignment of cargo. A succession of lighters left the quay and moored alongside us, and all day we listened with delight to the clatter and whirr of the winches as they transferred bales and barrels to the *Batoum's* hatches. The final and infallible date of departure, announced the Turkish merchant who had chartered the ship for her voyage to Odessa, was September the twenty-second—four days later.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CITY OF DISGUISES.

CONSTANTINOPLE, even at its most normal, has ever been a city of concealment — concealed motives, concealed truths and falsehoods, concealed cruelties, and concealed persons. There, the way to a treaty, a change of Government, a concession or a commercial contract, is likely to be through back-doors and curtained corridors, with many a halt for whispered promises, whispered betrayals, and the handing over of *baksheesh.*

When normal life is upset by abnormal conditions, the cauldron of crookedness bubbles over with a thousand and one conspiracies. Every other man is intriguing for himself, his safety, his pocket, his party, his family, or his Government appointment, or from sheer inability not to intrigue. Such a period was the late summer of 1918, when we were disguised spectators of the misery and oppression that preceded the downfall of the Turkish Empire.

Four-fifths of the population, including the Turks themselves, were deadly sick of war and wanted peace at any price. They hated the

Germans, and above all hated Enver Pasha and other Young Turk dictators, who ruled by violence with the support of the Germans. Only the politicians, the corrupt officials, and the speculators were against a separate peace.

Many a time before I escaped I heard curses on Enver and on the Germans uttered by civilians, by officers, and even by guards. Once, when a party of us were sitting in Petits Champs Gardens, a waiter brought with the bill for tea a slip of paper on which he had written "*Vive l'Angleterre!*" Later, dressed as a sailor and sitting in the cafés with Kulman, I often heard the same sentiments expressed.

Yet the miserable, exploited populace was powerless to impress its wishes on the Government. It was too disunited and too listless for action. A total lack of national consciousness made Constantinople a capital without a country. The population was a haphazard jumble of races, an *olla podrida* of peoples that nothing, not even hunger and tyranny, could mould into a coherent whole. Men murmured individually, but collectively they remained resigned and silent.

If circulation be the test of a city's vitality, it proved Constantinople to be at very low ebb. All Mediterranean peoples move slowly in the streets; but the Constantinopolitans of 1918, I noticed, seemed to get nowhere; they crawled about aimlessly, or leaned against the walls and doorways in fatalistic inaction, *waiting for something to happen.*

In any case, the least attempt at organised protest was likely to lead to sudden disappear-

ances. The dungeons of Stamboul jail were crammed with Greek, Armenian, and Turkish suspects; the infamous "Hall of Justice," in the Ministry of War, echoed the cries of prisoners whose interrogators extracted information by means of the bastinado. Open malcontents were hanged daily.

Every decent-living person was likely to feel the tentacles of Young Turk tyranny, as personified by Bedri Bey, Prefect of Police, and Djevad Bey, Military Governor of Constantinople. Only the unrighteous flourished. The speculation and graft were colossal, and beyond the most extravagant dreams of the British brand of war profiteer. Everybody was on the make. Ministers and high officials received huge bribes, little politicians made little fortunes by acting as go-betweens, rich merchants manipulated so as to get hundreds per cent profit.

To take but a few of the swindles that I remember from my Constantinople days, there were the Smyrna sugar *affaire,* involving the barefaced theft of twenty truckloads of a consignment from Austria; the tobacco swindle, which made three directors of the Régie very wealthy men within a month; the cocaine and quinine corner, engineered by a few Jewish speculators, so that for a time the doctors could obtain these drugs only at the price of two hundred pounds Turkish a kilo; the oil scandal, the wood scandal, and the widespread flour-adulteration scandal, whereby the lowest grade of bread, which was all that the poor could afford, became not only unnourishing but inedible,

There being no system of rationing, only the well-to-do could buy the dearer necessities of ordinary life. The poor remained sugarless, for example, because sugar cost from two pounds sterling a kilo; and the chances were that even when bought at that price it would have been mixed with powdered marble. Thousands actually starved; while the beautiful island of Prinkipo, with its summer palaces and villas, swarmed with oily, scoundrelly, enormously wealthy Levantine vulgarians.

Some of the Ministers traded openly. Enver Pasha and his associates owned two of the largest shops in Stamboul. The Committee of Union and Progress, a vampire of corruption that drained the very life-blood of Turkey, engaged enthusiastically in the orgy of speculation, and by controlling the transport amassed millions for their party. These sums the Committee had begun to invest in Switzerland and elsewhere as early as 1917. When the crash came, Enver, Talaat, and other Young Turk leaders were thus able to abscond with bulging pockets.

The police, of course, shared in the plunder, and dabbled in every species of blackmail. They waxed fat on the system that entitled them to see the *vécikas* (identity papers) of any able-bodied man at any time. As the city contained many thousands of deserters, without taking into account those who obtained exemption from military service by continued bribes to recruiting officers and gendarmes, this was a profitable responsibility.

A forged *vécika*, properly stamped, cost anything from ten to twenty pounds. To buy off a policeman when unprovided with a *vécika* was more speculative. A solitary gendarme, alone in a dark street, might be content to accept five pounds; whereas two gendarmes together could be persuaded only with difficulty to accept twenty, their mutual dignity and that of their official positions having to be maintained in face of each other.

The city was full of suppressed identities. Deserters were as common as nuts in May, and so were disguises. An enormous game of hide-and-seek was in progress, with police *baksheesh* as the forfeit for being caught.

When a rich man—Turk, Greek, Jew, or Armenian—was conscripted, he could always pretend sickness, bribe the military doctor to send him to a hospital, bribe the hospital doctor who examined him, and bribe the medical board to give him leave. At the larger hospitals of Constantinople, such as Haidar Pasha and Gumuch Souyou, the recognised tariff was twenty-five pounds for each month's leave, with pretended complaints suggested by the doctor by way of bonus.

The discontent and the misery twice showed itself in shots at Enver Pasha as he drove through the streets in his Mercèdes; but the bullets either missed him or flattened themselves on the chain-mail which he was reputed to wear.

Otherwise its outward manifestation was confined to the spreading of rumours indicative of an early victory for the Allies. The "Tatavla

Agency," so named from a district inhabited by Greek merchants, was the centre of anti-German propaganda. From it, even at the time of Hindenburg's last great drive, there spread the wildest reports of Ententist successes. Some, no doubt, were concocted to influence the Bourse; but the object of most was to encourage the starving population in their hopes for the downfall of the Young Turko-German régime.

No statement was too far-fetched to be believed in the bazaars and cafés. When the British aeroplanes renewed their bomb-raids on Constantinople in the autumn of 1918, Yeats-Brown dropped various hints that the attacks were not the work of the British, but were a display of German frightfulness, to show what would happen if Turkey's loyalty to Germany wavered. After an interval of weeks this beautiful lie was whispered back to him by a Greek, with well-imagined circumstances and details to make it more plausible.

Yeats-Brown and Paul lived through the most extravagant adventures before the Turkish armistice found them still in disguised liberty. They first escaped with the help of Miss Whitaker, "the Edith Cavell of Constantinople." It was owing to her that, already before leaving the prison at Psamatia, they were well supplied with money and could look forward to a hiding-place. As prisoners, they had kept in touch with her by means of letters, five-minute meetings outside the British church, and short conversations in the park, under the complacent eyes of a bribed guard.

One night they slipped through the window of their room in the prison-house, and having climbed along a narrow ledge, let themselves into the street with a rope. Wearing fezes and with their faces stained brown, they walked to Theodore's house. Afterwards they moved to the room prepared for them in Pera.

A few days later Paul, dressed as an Arab, left Constantinople with two Greeks. The party of three crossed the Sea of Marmora in a sailing-boat, landed on the northern coast, and began tramping towards the Gulf of Enos.

Unfortunately for Paul, the description of him which the Ministry of War had circulated mentioned that he had a prominent stoop. A stranger with this peculiarity was found asleep in the church of a Greek village, and by arresting him the local gendarme earned (but probably never received) the reward offered for the British officer's capture. Paul was brought back to the capital and dungeoned in the Ministry of War prison.

Yeats-Brown, meanwhile, had been stalking about the streets of Constantinople as Mlle. Josephine Albert, in female clothes lent by Miss Whitaker. He was now at a loose end, for Paul and the Greeks were to have been the advance-guard of a larger party, including Yeats-Brown and several civilians who wished to leave Turkey.

After weeks of excitement in the City of Disguises, he received an unexpected message from two old friends, who were living in a back room of Theodore's house. Fulton and Stone had

escaped from a train at Haidar Pasha station two hours after my disappearance from the ferry stage. With the help of my map they made their way by moonlight to San Stefano aerodrome. There they waited for three days at the place of rendezvous appointed by John Willie the Bosnian aviator. Made desperate by his non-appearance, one of them called at the German officers' mess and inquired for him; but, as they then learned, John Willie had been arrested a week earlier as a suspect, and was in the Ministry of War prison awaiting court-martial.

Fulton and Stone returned to Constantinople, and bribed Theodore to hide them in his house. They were visited by Miss Whitaker, who brought money from Mr S., and by Yeats-Brown.

For want of a better opportunity the three British officers planned to buy a small sailing-boat and take it across the Black Sea. Prince Avaloff, the Georgian officer, who was a semi-prisoner at Psamatia, had kept in touch with Yeats-Brown, and promised to accompany them. Having landed somewhere near Poti, their plan would be to make for Avaloff's estate in Georgia. It was while these arrangements were being made that White and I heard from the trio, as a result of Titoff's visit to Theodore.

For many weeks the Maritza restaurant had been watched. A police spy suspected Theodore; and one afternoon gendarmes surrounded his house, while others entered and searched every room. Very unfortunately for Yeats-Brown, whose hiding-place lay elsewhere, he was visiting

Fulton and Stone at the time. All three were captured.

A queer procession passed through the winding alleys of Stamboul to the Ministry of War prison. First went Theodore, blinking nervously behind his blue-glassed spectacles. Then came Yeats-Brown, in his brand-new disguise of a Hungarian mechanic. Fulton and Stone were behind him, wearing only shirts, pants, and socks; for they had been half-dressed when captured, and the police refused permission to put on coats and trousers. Theodore's two sisters and his old mother brought up the rear.

When the police surrounded Theodore's house Miss Whitaker was on her way to visit Fulton and Stone. Seeing gendarmes before the door she passed on, and returned to her own home in Pera; but for long afterwards she was conscious of being spied upon and followed. It was for this reason that she had to abandon her intention of bringing to the *Batoum* the money which White and I were to receive from Mr S.

The prison beneath the Ministry of War now contained an extraordinary gathering of characters in the melodrama of escape and capture. Paul was joined by Yeats-Brown, Fulton, and Stone; John Willie the Bosnian was in another cell, with some political prisoners; Theodore, weakened by lack of food, fell ill in a dreadful dungeon and nearly died. A trial, he knew, could only have one result for him—sentence of hanging. His mother and his two sisters received rather better treatment, and were soon released.

The four Britishers lived through many strange days in the prison, where they consorted with a variety of captives that included Greeks, Armenians, Turkish officers, two Mahommedan notabilities from Cairo, a young Turkish prince who had been imprisoned for brawling in the Sultan's Palace, and the prince's eunuch. Yeats-Brown and Paul, meantime, planned to escape from the famous old jail—a feat which no captive had yet performed since it was built six hundred years ago.

While walking in the garden one evening they slipped away from their guards and mingled with a crowd of officials who were crossing the courtyard outside the Ministry of War. Swerving aside before they reached the sentried gate, the pair climbed over some railings—and were free once more.

They walked across the Golden Horn bridge, and so to Pera. There, once again, Miss Whitaker and her friends found them a place of concealment near the deserted British Embassy.

Then began for the escaped couple a period of flitting from one excitement to another. They became involved in a succession of underground activities; and, with the help of Greeks and the clever co-operation of Miss Whitaker, they spread around the city reports, beliefs, hopes, and arguments likely to influence citizens in favour of the Allies and against the Germans and Young Turks. They buried their identities under darkened hair, false moustaches, fezes, and forged *vécikas*.

Yeats-Brown's propaganda work brought him

into contact with a small group of politicians and malcontents who were plotting a *coup d'état* against the Young Turks. Although the miserable populace had no popular leader to voice its discontent, there came a moment—while the Bulgars were at the gates of Adrianople, direct communications with Germany were cut, the Allied Fleet threatened Dedeagatch and the citizens of Aleppo were preparing to surrender to Allenby's victorious cavalry—when everybody in Constantinople knew that Turkey was beaten. Open rebellion, which was to have hanged Talaat, Enver, and Djemal Pashas high in the square of the Seraskarat, then threatened.

But the rising was still-born, owing to treachery. The Prefect of Police suddenly quadrupled his patrols, a few Turkish officers were arrested, a few more civilians were hanged, a few conspirators disappeared into the submerged world where men walked cautiously and in the shadow, a few machine-guns were placed so as to command a Greek cathedral, a couple of aged senators were executed for having "intrigued for a political resolution hostile to the Government," and life went on as before—upon the surface. . . .

But escaped prisoners did not live upon the surface. They were in touch with seditious elements beneath it. Once, when Yeats-Brown was in a certain café with some Greeks, and the talk was becoming wild as the *árak* bottle passed, there entered a detective known to everybody, even to the British officer who was the youngest initiate in "crime" present. And without a whisper or a wink the talk swung,

easily and naturally, from the rankest sedition to the most harmless commonplace.

"We will destroy the Young Turks!" said a speaker; "we will destroy the Young Turks and cut them in little pieces!"

He was harmonising his words with indescribably graphic gesture when his expressive hands opened in a bland expression of resignation.

"What, therefore, can we do, my friends?" he continued. "We must remain calm, and retain our dignity as citizens of a great city."

Nobody looked round or betrayed surprise; but the alien presence was sensed by all. Soon after this scene the meeting adjourned to a cellar, where a quiet elderly gentleman, the proprietor of an hotel inhabited chiefly by German officers, declared himself anxious to cut his clients' throats.

In war-time Constantinople one grew accustomed to this atmosphere of melodrama, and learned not to regard it too seriously. The more one knows of the Constantinopolitan of to-day, the less can one trust any estimate of him. Eternally fickle, like his forerunners who looked on with equal enthusiasm at the triumph and execution of their emperors and sultans, they saw no incongruity in the city's hero-worship of Enver Bey in 1908 and its deep detestation of Enver Pasha in 1918. Now, after welcoming the French and British with mad joy one year ago, they are restless, and again wear the cloak of conspiracy. The wayward fickleness of Constantinople ruined the Byzantine Greeks, and sapped the strength of the Roman Empire.

Now, after a long period of fretful wedlock, she is shaking herself free from the Turk. Whoever next attempts to rule her will have some restless days and nights.

At the beginning of September there arrived in Constantinople another escaped prisoner, who was to play an important part in the sensational events that preceded the downfall of the Young Turks and their German partners.

Several months earlier Lieutenant-Colonel Newcombe had been imprisoned in the Turkish Ministry of War, while awaiting court-martial for an attempted escape. After his acquittal, owing to lack of evidence, he was allowed into the city with the prison interpreter. In a Pera tea-shop he met Mlle. S., a Franco-Greek lady of Entente sympathies, who offered to help him in any way possible. A secret correspondence followed; and when Colonel Newcombe was sent to the prison camp at Broussa, Mlle. S., with her maid, followed him. She stayed at a small hotel, on the pretence of taking the sulphur baths for which Broussa is famous. Several meetings took place, including a rendezvous at the house of the local Austrian Consul, whose daughters were schoolfellows of Mlle. S.

The final interview at Broussa was when Colonel Newcombe, having obtained the clothes of an Arab *imam*, disguised himself in this dress and slipped out of camp unobserved. He walked to the hotel, and there the scheme of escape was definitely arranged. He then returned, and by climbing over a wall got back into the prison-house without being seen.

Mlle. S. left Broussa for Constantinople. On the way she stopped at Mudania (the port of Broussa), to bargain with two Greek boatmen, who agreed to take the British officer across the Sea of Marmora. From Constantinople she had a letter smuggled to Broussa, explaining how the boatmen might be recognised.

Having read the letter, Colonel Newcombe again disguised himself as an Arab, and at dusk slipped away from the prison-house, while another officer-prisoner distracted the guards' attention by running in the opposite direction. He walked all night by moonlight, and reached Mudania next morning.

Having found the Greeks, and paid twenty pounds Turkish for the hire of their boat, he put to sea with them. A strong wind raged, so that he was fourteen hours on the Sea of Marmora, living during this time on bread and raisins. Finally, he reached Constantinople and went to the house of some relations of Mlle. S.

Like White and myself, Colonel Newcombe planned to go to Russia. He, also, had his fill of adventure. Once he remained safely hidden in Miss Whitaker's house while the police were searching it for Yeats-Brown and Paul.

He wrote several anti-German proclamations for distribution among the Turkish soldiers, and concocted a letter to the Turkish army commanders, advising them to refuse further service unless a new Ministry were formed. But the Turco-German debacle in the Near East, of which General Allenby's victories in Palestine and the Bulgarian surrender were the beginnings, made

him abandon this work for something more important. Soon he found himself drawn into the very centre of the vortex of plotting that swirled around the Sultan, the Cabinet, and the Sublime Porte.

The peace parties lacked a leader powerful enough to take open action; and when the old Sultan, who had been but a puppet dancing to strings pulled by Talaat and Enver, died in July, they hoped to find one in his brother, the successor to the throne.

The new ruler, although he was neither strong enough nor able enough to challenge the Young Turk leaders until after the Bulgarian armistice, certainly leaned towards the Entente and favoured peace. Almost his first act was to send for the only English tailor in Constantinople, a civil prisoner, and to order several uniforms from him.

The excitement among the Turkish politicians was indescribable.

"Have you heard about Mr Hayden, the English tailor? The Sultan said to him . . ."—and rumour made the Sultan tell the English tailor everything that was sensationally anti-German and anti-Enver.

Had the Sultan opposed the Grand Vizier and Enver Pasha in July, he would have found support, for three-fourths of Constantinople detested the Government. But the constabulary were faithful to Enver, who could likewise have relied upon the many thousands of German troops concentrated in the city; and a premature attempt by the Sultan to withdraw Turkey

from the war would have risked his life and his throne.

The defection of Bulgaria had the effect of an unexpected cold douche on the Young Turk dictators, who, after the Turkish occupation of Batoum and capture of Baku, had been dreaming of a Greater Turkey that was to include the Maritza basin, most of the Dobrudja, and the whole of the Caucasus from the Black Sea to the Caspian, with a sphere of influence extending eastward to Bokhara and Samarkand. Agents and gramophone records were carrying the voice of Enver all over the Moslem world.

When the Balkan Railway was cut, and daily reports of German retreats in France continued to arrive, even the Young Turk politicians began to desert the rotten ship of state. The opposition groups—the Liberal, the Navy, and the Khoja parties—raised their hands and began to intrigue for a complete surrender to the Allies.

Djambolat Bey, Minister of the Interior, resigned. Rahmi Bey, the powerful Vali of Smyrna, who throughout the war had shown every consideration to the Entente subjects in his *vilayet*, came to Constantinople with the avowed intention of working for an immediate peace. Talaat was for bargain and compromise. Only Enver Pasha and his personal followers remained faithful to their German friends. The Sultan's chance had come.

Colonel Newcombe decided on an audacious plan. He wrote an able memorandum which suggested that if Turkey now threw herself

on the mercy of the Allies and sued for a separate peace, she would obtain better terms than if she waited until Germany was thoroughly beaten. This memorandum, originally the draft of a proposed proclamation to the Turkish Army, was taken by Miss Whitaker to a Committee politician of her acquaintance. Eventually one copy of it was given to Fethi Bey, the new Minister of the Interior. Another passed through the hands of the Sultan's dentist to the Sultan himself.

A week earlier—on September the 29th—the Young Turk Cabinet had met to consider the Bulgarian demand for an armistice; and the Grand Vizier, who arrived from Germany by the last Balkan express to pass through Sofia, offered his resignation. At the time nobody could form an alternative Ministry, so Talaat again took up the reins of power.

The Sultan and the Minister of the Interior received their copies of Colonel Newcombe's memorandum on October the 5th. During the intervening days it had become more and more plain that Germany was doomed to defeat. The Sultan and the Peace parties, therefore, only wanted a suitable bludgeon for a *coup de grâce* to the Ministry.

They found it in this purely unofficial communication from an escaped prisoner of war. Colonel Newcombe's memorandum was produced and discussed at a stormy Council of the Committee of Union and Progress, which resulted in the definite resignation of Talaat and Enver. Tewfik Pasha, Izzet Fuad Pasha, and other

Opposition leaders were called into consultation by the Sultan.

From being a hunted fugitive, Colonel Newcombe suddenly found himself a man of courted consequence. As a special favour he was asked not to carry out his plans for escaping from Turkey, because the Ottoman Government believed he would be useful in arranging an armistice. He met the Vali of Smyrna at the Tokatlian Hotel, and there the British prisoner and the high Turkish official shook hands and discussed the changing international situation.

On October the 16th, Colonel Newcombe, accompanied by Miss Whitaker, went by appointment to the house of a politician, where he met the new Minister of the Interior, the Vali of Smyrna, and other notables. Over the dinner table the mighty questions of peace and war were then debated by an escaped prisoner of war and a prominent Minister of the country in which he was technically still a captive.

Colonel Newcombe explained that though he worked for allied and not Turkish interests, his friendly advice was that the Ottoman Government should sue immediately for a separate armistice, because whereas Germany wanted to keep a weak Turkey, whom she could dominate, the Allies' principle of the rights of nationality forbade any idea of complete domination.

The Turks' attitude at this curious meeting was summed up in remarks, made by Fethi Bey, Minister of the Interior—

"We know we have lost our chance. There

have been mistakes in the past. We are practically bankrupt. But we honestly hate the Germans, and, without kowtowing to the British, look to them to help us and to be our friends, as we want to be friends with them."

Colonel Newcombe and the Turkish officials thrashed out such questions as Turkey's financial bankruptcy, the opening of the Dardanelles, the capitulations, autonomy for Armenia and Arabia, and punishment for the Armenian massacres and for the maltreatment of British prisoners from Kut-el-Amara (whereby nearly 80 per cent of the latter had died). Then, dinner being over, the Minister of the Interior dictated a long telegram, which the British officer was to send to Mr Lloyd George as soon as he should reach allied territory.

Next day the Ministry tried to send him out of Turkey by aeroplane, but failed, because all aircraft were in the hands of the Germans. It was agreed that he should receive special passports, and proceed *viâ* Smyrna to either Chios or Mudros.

After the dinner party of the 16th events moved rapidly towards an armistice. The Vali of Smyrna caused a sensation two days later by stating openly, in the 'Journal d'Orient,' that peace negotiations were in progress, and that the Germans would have to go. Later in the day he again met Colonel Newcombe at the Tokatlian Hotel, and discussed the best means of approaching England for an armistice. By now the escaped Colonel was going about

Constantinople quite openly, although Yeats-Brown and Paul remained more or less in hiding.

Meanwhile General Townshend, who was still a prisoner on Prinkipo Island, also had sent a memorandum to the Government. A Turkish armistice commission was formed, and he was asked by the Grand Vizier to accompany the delegates who were about to leave the country; which he did. It was arranged that Colonel Newcombe would follow in a few days' time.

On his last night in Constantinople Colonel Newcombe went by appointment to the terrace of the deserted British Embassy, and there met Captain Yeats-Brown, who had slipped past the police into the Embassy grounds. It was a meeting that neither of them will ever forget. Below was the Golden Horn, shimmering in the moonlight. Beyond it Stamboul showed up dimly, quiet and apparently asleep. But the watchers on the Embassy terrace knew that the city might stir from slumber at any moment; for the Phanar was bristling with machine-guns, St Sophia was an armed camp, and, more terrible than all, people were starving in the streets. The waning sickle moon that rode above Stamboul seemed the symbol of the Turks' waning dominion over Christian peoples. Very soon the Crescent would go down. Very soon the Union Jack would float from the Embassy's barren flagstaff. Very soon Pera would be decked with banners, and an Allied fleet would proclaim an end to the nightmare of famine and oppression.

Next day Colonel Newcombe, who had been

handed civilian passports by the Minister of the Interior, travelled from Constantinople to Smyrna. Finally, he left Turkey in the company of Raouf Bey, the Minister of Marine. The party put to sea in a trawler, and were picked up by H.M.S. *Liverpool*. They were taken to Mudros, where the British Admiral C.-in-C. and General Townshend were already dealing with the Turkish delegates.

Up to the very end the Young Turk leaders hoped to hold the real, if not the ostensible, control in Constantinople. Captain Yeats-Brown was told by a politician, one of the ex-Grand Vizier's intimates, that "nobody but Talaat could possibly manage Turkey," and that "the English, if they come, would be well advised to deal with the Committee of Union and Progress, as there is no other real party in the country. They not only have all the money, but all the brains and energy as well." Which last statement was nearly true.

But when it came to saying that Talaat was one of the dominant brains of the century, and comparable as a statesman only to Lloyd George, the disguised British officer could not help smiling and suggesting: "Sure Talaat is not indispensable? If he goes, another ex-telegraphist may arise as good as he!"

This the member of the Committee of Union and Progress regarded as almost blasphemy; but the fact that all the Young Turk leaders were self-made men, with little knowledge of the science and history of civilised governance, was one of the causes why von Wangenheim,

von Bernstorff, and other emissaries of German Imperialism, were able, for four years, to inspire a policy of Turkey for the Germans.

The sudden *volte-face* of the Turkish press, the announcement of the armistice terms, the flight of the three chief criminals (Talaat, Enver, and Djemal Pashas), and the downfall of the swaggering Germans, brought great joy to the miserable populace of Constantinople. They vented their feelings in enthusiasm over some released prisoners who visited Pera, wearing their carefully-hoarded khaki uniforms.

The curtain was down, the sordid tragedy of oppression and corruption was over. The new era opened in the mist of a November morning, with the long low lines of an Allied fleet, steaming very slowly past the Marmora shore towards the Bosphorus.

CHAPTER XVI.

STOWAWAYS, LTD.

TITOFF was head of a syndicate of ship's officers which might have named itself "Stowaways, Limited." He was the schemer-in-chief; and the others, while disliking him heartily, were content to rely on his successful cunning.

Besides ourselves, the syndicate undertook to carry across the Black Sea two Greeks, a Jewess wanted by the Turkish police, and four passportless prostitutes; all of whom, to the extent of some thirty to a hundred pounds apiece, wished to leave Constantinople for Odessa.

Most of the crew, also, were smuggling men, women, or material across the Black Sea. Itself included four Russian soldiers, who had escaped from prison camps in Turkey, and were passing themselves off as seamen. The bo'sun's particular line of business was a woman thief, who had with her a heavy purse and a trunkful of property, stolen from a merchant who had been her dear friend. Katrina, the kitchen girl who brought us our food, invested in a well-to-do Turkish deserter.

As for the non-human contraband, it was

stowed in every corner of the vessel—cocaine, opium, raw leather, tobacco, cognac, and quinine. Prices were extravagant enough in Constantinople, but in Russia they were colossal. The difference in the price of drugs, for example, often amounted to hundreds per cent. The demand for cocaine as contraband was so great during the week before we sailed that by the end of it the chemists of Pera and Galata would sell none under £100 a kilo; but in Odessa, we heard, one might dispose of it without difficulty for four hundred pounds a kilo.

Even White and I became infected by the contraband craze, and, in partnership with Kulman, gambled successfully on a consignment of leather, and so covered some of our escape expenses.

At dusk, when we left the wireless cabin and paced the shadowed portion of the deck for exercise, we often saw a small boat creeping towards whichever side of the *Batoum* happened not to face the shore. Somebody in it would exchange low whistlings with somebody on deck—the second somebody often being Titoff. When it had been made fast to the bottom of the gangway, a figure, or two figures, would climb to the deck and disappear. Sometimes they brought and left a package; sometimes it was a visitor himself—or herself—who did not depart with the rowing boat.

Besides the mystery traffic from shore to ship, there was also a certain amount from ship to shore. For this the steward—a Russian Jew—was responsible. A Turkish merchant had

chartered the *Batoum* for the coming voyage, and since our many delays in sailing were the result of his haggling with Government officials over the amount of *baksheesh* to be paid for permission to export, he undertook to feed the officers and crew for as long as they remained at Constantinople. Incidentally, he unknowingly fed White and myself, besides the other stowaways and the escaped Russian soldiers. The steward ordered more provisions than were needed, and a few hours after the delivery of each consignment a boatload would be sent back to the quay and carted to the bazaars. Titoff, who organised the sale, shared the proceeds with the steward.

Titoff's methods of graft took him into many dubious bypaths, notably those around the offices of a Greek coal-dealer. After preliminary plottings, with Viktor as interpreter, he ordered a hundred tons. The coal-dealer delivered ninety, the bill for a hundred was presented to the Turkish merchant, and Titoff and the Greek split the value of the missing ten tons. It was easy enough for the chief engineer to make good the deficit by burning ten tons more on paper than in the furnaces.

With all this illicit traffic in men and goods, there were some restless half-hours during the last few days of our stay in the Bosphorus. Trouble was caused by the bo'sun's woman-thief, whose presence among us the police suspected. Five times they searched for her. The bo'sun detailed a man to watch the shore, and whenever a police launch appeared this look-

out would blow a whistle. All the stowaways then scurried to their various hiding-places.

White and I, being the most dangerous cargo, were given the safest—and certainly the dirtiest—hiding-place of all. This was in the ballast-tanks at the very bottom of the ship, underneath the propeller-shaft. The entrance to them was through a narrow manhole, covered by a cast-iron lid, about twenty yards down a dark passage leading from the engine-room to the propeller.

The alarm having been given, Feodor, the second engineer, would lead us along the passage by the light of a taper, remove some boards, raise the lid, and help us to wriggle into the black cavity below. Our feet would be covered by six inches of bilge-water while we crouched down, so as to leave him room enough to replace the iron cover and relay the wooden boards that hid it. Then, one at a time, and with our knees squelching in the water, we crawled from tank to tank.

Half-way along the line of tanks were two that contained small mattresses, which the second engineer had placed in position for us. After the first day they were sodden with the bilge-water; but at any rate it was better to sit on them than in the water itself. The limited space made it impossible for us to adopt any but a very cramped position, with hunched-up shoulders rubbing against the slime that coated the sides of each tank. Standing was impossible, and lying down meant leaning one's head on the wet mattress and soaking one's feet in the drain

of bilge that swished backwards and forwards with every motion of the ship.

Complete blackness surrounded us. The air was dank and musty, so that matches spluttered only feebly when struck, and the light from a taper was hardly strong enough to chase the darkness from the half of each small tank.

When, after each search, the police returned to their launch, we would hear the heavy boots of the second engineer tramping along the passage overhead. As we listened to the nerve-edging noise that accompanied the removal of the boards and the iron lid, we crouched into the best-hidden corners of our respective tanks, not knowing whether a friend or a policeman was at the entrance. We scarcely breathed until there came, booming and echoing through the hollow compartments, the word "*Signor!*"—Feodor's password, denoting that all was clear, and that we might return to the engine-room.

The 22nd of September was the final date fixed for the departure. By late afternoon of the 21st all the Turkish merchant's cargo, legitimate and otherwise, had been brought from the quay by lighters, and thence transferred by winches to the *Batoum's* hatches. The export officials had been squared, the ship's papers were passed and stamped, the bunkers were fully loaded with inferior coal. All on board, from the captain to the least-considered stowaway, were content, although nervous of what might happen during the next twenty-four hours.

At about five o'clock we received a welcome visit from Vladimir Wilkowsky, the Polish

aviator who had acted as our intermediary from Psamatia. He bribed his guard to remain in Stamboul while he crossed the bridge to Galata and hired the *kaik* that brought him to the *Batoum*. He himself intended to follow us across the Black Sea, escaping on the next steamer to leave Constantinople for Odessa.

Meanwhile we were especially glad to see him, for he brought from Mr S. the three hundred pounds for which we had waited so anxiously. In return, we sent improvised cheques written on strips of foolscap paper. We now had enough money to pay Titoff's exorbitant fee, and still leave funds to live in Odessa for some weeks. Two German revolvers, bought for us in the bazaar by Kulman, added to the feeling of security.

Wilkowsky claimed to have sent on board the food and clothing which we left at Psamatia, and he was able to confirm our suspicions that Titoff must have stolen it. For the present we refrained from tackling the chief engineer, wishing to avoid a scandal before departure. We promised ourselves to deal with him adequately at Odessa.

That evening there were more than the usual number of mysterious visits from small boats. The full complement of stowaways was taken aboard, the last cases of contraband shipped. Until a late hour the engine-room resounded to the hammerings of Feodor and Josef, who were hiding a late consignment of cocaine. Our own investment in raw leather was in Kulman's cabin.

The firemen and greasers celebrated their farewell in the usual manner. By nine o'clock several were roaring drunk. One of them—the Bolshevik who had told of the drowning of Baltic Fleet officers—staggered across the aft deck with a drawn knife in his hand, shouting that he wanted to finish off the third engineer, who had insulted him. He found Josef in the engine-room, but was cowed and disarmed when the engineer threatened him with a revolver. He let himself be led away, while verbally murdering all officers in general and Josef in particular.

At 6.30 in the morning, Josef roused us from our sleep on the floor of his cabin, and invited us to the ballast-tanks; for, as the police and customs officials would be on board most of the time until we weighed anchor, we must remain out of sight until the *Batoum* left Turkish waters. Since we expected to be hidden for about twelve hours, we took with us a loaf of bread, some dried sausage, and a bottle of water. After a last look through the porthole at Seraglio Point and the cupolas of Stamboul, I passed below, hoping and expecting that when I next looked into the open air we should be clear of Turkey.

For a long while nothing happened to take our thoughts from the cramped space and the foul air of the tanks. We breakfasted sparingly, and allowed ourselves one cigarette apiece. More we dared not smoke, because of the oppressive atmosphere.

Then, at about ten o'clock, we heard from above a succession of three thuds—the signal to all stowaways in the region of the engine-room

that the police were on board. We made ourselves as comfortable as possible, and took minute care to make no sound.

We waited in frantic impatience for the noises from the engine-room that would denote a getting-up of steam. At half-past eleven there began a continuous, rhythmic spurting, which we took to be the sound of the engines in action. Soon afterwards a grinding and scraping from the deck convinced us that the anchor was being raised.

"Put it there, old man," said White, thrusting his hand through the hole that linked our respective tanks. "We're leaving Turkey at last!"

But not yet were we leaving Turkey. The noise from the engine-room was merely that of a pump preparing the pressure. After three-quarters of an hour it quietened as suddenly as it had begun, and we realised that the *Batoum* was still moored in the Bosphorus, between Seraglio Point and the Sultan's Palace of Dolma Bagtché.

And then, soon after noon, came the real music for which we had waited. The telegraph from the bridge tinkled, a fuller and more throaty rhythm radiated from the engine-room, loud grinding and rattling from the deck testified that the anchor had parted company with the bottom of the Bosphorus. A few minutes later we felt the ship swinging round, and a swishing and rushing of water told us that this time we really were away. In silence we shook hands again.

For long hours we remained in the slimy

tanks, crouched on the sodden mattresses; but it was no longer purgatory. The swish, swish of the screw chased away all sensation of discomfort, and there remained only the realisation that we had left Constantinople, and soon would have left Turkey. My old habit of subconsciously fitting metre and rhyme to mechanical rhythm, to which I had succumbed many times when seated behind aeroplane engines, began to assert itself as we sat in the darkness and listened to the penetrating throb, throb from the engine-room above us. Incongruously enough the lines that continued to pulse through my mind, in time with the steady rise and fall of the piston, were those of a G. K. Chesterton ballad—

> "If I had been a heathen,
> I'd have kissed Neæra's curls,
> And filled my life with love affairs,
> My house with dancing girls.
> But Higgins is a heathen,
> And to meetings he is forced,
> Where his aunts, who are not married,
> Demand to be divorced."

These words held sway for five hours of insistent chugging. They were succeeded by others from the "Prodigal Son," which lent themselves maddeningly to the monotonous sound—

> "Here come I to my own again,
> Fed, forgiven, and known again;
> Claimed by bone of my bone again,
> And sib to flesh of my flesh.
> The fatted calf is dressed for me—
> But the husks have a greater zest for me.
> I think my pigs will be best for me,
> So I'm off to the sties afresh."

By early evening, we had calculated, the *Batoum* should be leaving Turkish territorial waters and entering the Black Sea. Just before six there came the shock of a bitter disappointment. The captain's telegraph clanged, the engines subdued to dead slow, the vessel swung round into the tide and seemed to remain almost stationary for a quarter of an hour. We had expected a last search by the Turkish customs authorities at the outlet of the Bosphorus, and surmised that this was the reason for the slackened speed.

But a repetition of the whirring and clanking on deck, followed by a loud splash, showed that the anchor was in action again, and that something more important than a mere search was on hand. For two hours longer we remained in the blackness, unenlightened and very anxious. Then, after the usual removal of the boards and the lid, there floated through the tanks a low-voiced "*Signor!*"

Feodor, candle in hand, was waiting for us. He whispered a warning to make as little noise as possible, because two Turkish officials were on board. Having reconnoitred to make sure that the way to Josef's cabin was clear, he led us there.

The delay, it appeared, was because the Turkish merchant had left some clearance papers at Constantinople. He had left for the capital by motor-car, and meanwhile two of the customs police would remain on the *Batoum*. The merchant was expected to return with the missing document next morning, when permission to leave would be given.

We slept in the cabin, and at dawn descended once more to the ship's bowels. We spent five more hours of purgatory in the ballast-tanks. The *Batoum* remained motionless during three of them, but the last two were enlivened by the steady wash of displaced water as it slid past the flanks of the vessel. Finally we heard, for the last time, the blessed signal, "*Signor!*"

"*Fineesh Turkey,*" said Feodor, as he smiled and helped us through the manhole.

Gone was the Bosphorus. In its place we saw the leaden waters of the Black Sea. From the porthole of Josef's cabin we could distinguish, many miles west of us, the coast-line of the country in which White had spent three years of the most dreadful captivity.

Feodor soon left us, for he had to bring other stowaways into the light of day. From every concealed cranny of the vessel men and women, as light-hearted as ourselves at deliverance from the Turks, were coming into the open.

One of the stowaways, a passportless woman whom the captain was taking with him to Odessa, did not rejoice for some time. As hiding-place for her, the old man had chosen a deep locker in his chart-room on the bridge. There she had remained for the past two days.

Now Katrina, the kitchen wench, knew nothing of the captain's lady. That morning, not wishing to send him back to the bunkers, where he had spent the previous days, she thought of the locker as a temporary home for her own particular stowaway—a Turkish deserter with coal-blackened face, untrimmed beard, and decidedly

odorous clothes. She dumped the Turk inside the locker, fastened the lid, and ran back to the kitchen.

The Turkish deserter landed with some violence on the captain's lady, and both received a bad fright as they clutched at each other in the darkness. Yet the lid could not be removed from the inside, and their calls were unheard outside the little room. The air in the unventilated locker grew ever more stuffy and velvety as the two people continued to breathe it. Eventually the woman fainted. The Turk, tired after a long spell of cramped wakefulness in the bunkers and the kitchen, composed himself philosophically and went to sleep.

When the *Batoum* was beyond the Bosphorus and all danger of a search, the captain opened the locker to release his friend. He inserted an arm, and jumped with fright when, instead of a woman, he produced a coal-blackened man. The woman revived when taken into the fresh air; but I should imagine that never again will she become a stowaway.

Titoff, fearing that some informer among the passengers might notice us, still kept White and myself under cover all day, although we took our usual exercise on deck each evening. The other stowaways were mingling with legitimate passengers, whose bedding was spread over the hatches.

I remember in particular a vivid, much-jewelled Jewess. I first saw her while she was exchanging violent words with two firemen, who were levying blackmail, using the

Austrian port authorities at Odessa as bogeyman. When, with tears and tantrums, she had fulfilled their demands, two other ruffians from among the crew took their place and demanded money, or in default jewels.

All the stowaways, in fact, except ourselves, were blackmailed in this fashion. The woman thief was victimised less than the others, because she was known to be the bo'sun's especial graft. As for us, we were under the protection of the ship's officers; and, more important still, we carried revolvers. In any case, Bolshevik Bill, the greaser, was our good friend and a power among the crew.

On the second evening at sea the firemen stole a case of *árak* from the cargo, drank themselves amok, and told Josef they were far too busy over private concerns to trouble about stoking the furnaces. The private concerns were mostly women from among the stowaways and poorer passengers.

The fires sank lower and lower, the engine-power dwindled, the propeller revolved more and more slowly. Finally, we came to almost a dead halt in the middle of the Black Sea. Throughout that night we crawled forward with a minimum number of revolutions, and even this small progress was possible only because the ship's officers took turns in the furnace-room and acted as stokers. Next morning the sobered firemen agreed to let bygones be bygones, and resumed work.

The rest of that nightmare voyage included only one incident worth recording. On the

morning of the fourth day, when we should have been within sight of land, the horizon in every direction was blank. The Turkish merchant who had chartered the *Batoum* was impatient to reach Odessa, and asked the captain for our position. The ancient tugged at his white beard and said that he was not quite sure, but would take soundings. These revealed shallow water, showing, according to the chart, that the ship must be some distance off her course.

The old captain was astonished, and called the first mate into consultation. Belaef's calculations with sextant and compass proved us to be heading several degrees too far east, so that the line of sailing would have taken us nearer Sevastopol than Odessa. Thereupon the captain handed over the ship's direction to the first mate. We edged northwards, and sighted Odessa at noon of the next day.

The city, with its pleasant terraces round the hills that dominate the wide-curved bay, and its half-western, half-Byzantine towers and domes gleaming yellow-gold in the sunlight, looked inviting enough. But for us it represented a gamble on the unknown. Odessa was in enemy occupation, and might be more inhospitable even than Constantinople. On the other hand, we should no longer be on the police lists of wanteds, as in Turkey, and it would be easier to pass muster among Russians than among dark-skinned Levantines. On the whole, we were optimistic. From Odessa a man with friends and money might make his way to

Siberia, where were some Allied detachments; and if, as the latest news indicated, Bulgaria was about to be emptied of Austro-German forces, Odessa would be a good jumping-off point for Sofia.

Meanwhile, our immediate concern was to get ashore without meeting the dock officials. Kulman and Josef promised to escort us, and thus lend the protection of their uniforms. We ourselves discarded seamen's clothes for the mufti worn when we escaped from the Turkish guards. White was still without a lounge-coat, and, although it was a hot day, he had to put on his faded old overcoat. For the rest, the luggage we were bringing to Russia—each of us possessed a toothbrush, a revolver, some cartridges, a comb, a razor, a spare shirt, a collar, and two handkerchiefs—could be wrapped in two sheets of newspaper.

Before we left there was a dramatic ceremony when we paid for our unauthorised passage, and dealt adequately with Michael Ivanovitch Titoff. He had reckoned on taking the money himself, and dividing it as he pleased. We knew that he could best be punished through his avarice. We therefore explained to Kulman, Josef, and Feodor that as they had done more for us than the chief engineer, we wanted them to receive a share corresponding to their risks and services, and proposed to hand all the money to them for distribution. From Titoff's share we would deduct the value of what he had stolen from us, and whatever we thought excessive in his charges for food.

Each of the trio had his own grievances

against Titoff, and all were delighted with the opportunity of making money at his expense. We prepared a balance-sheet, and invited Titoff into Josef's cabin.

Josef, as Titoff's subordinate, had been scared of offending him. Four glasses of undiluted vodka gave him courage. When the chief engineer entered the cabin, the third engineer was the most aggressive of us all.

"Michael Ivanovitch," he said, staring at Titoff with bloodshot eyes, "we are no longer at Constantinople, and our friends here insist on a just distribution of their money. This," handing him the balance-sheet and a list of his own, "is how it will be divided."

The chief rogue glared his indignation as White handed a handful of bank notes to Josef, and voiced it when he received the balance-sheet. He stood up and declaimed against the deductions, but soon subsided in face of the row of unfriendly faces, the grins, and the revolvers which White and I kept well in evidence."

"There is nothing more to be settled," said White. "Here we are among friends. Now leave us."

And Titoff went. At the door he turned and said to Josef, with meaning in his voice: "I shall have business with you later." Josef laughed, and poured for himself another glass of vodka.

The last we saw of Michael Ivanovitch Titoff was his yellow face, leaning over the side of the ship when, with Kulman and Josef, we rowed toward the docks.

They were taking us on shore before the customs officers boarded the *Batoum*. The other stowaways, who mingled with the legitimate passengers on the deck, were to come later.

The harbour was chock-full of forlorn-looking craft, which had evidently lain idle for a long while. We dodged around several of them, so as not to give the appearance of coming from the *Batoum*, and then made for the nearest quay. On it was an Austrian officer. When we were within fifty yards he looked at us through field-glasses, and detailed a group of soldiers to various points on the quay, evidently with the object of stopping and questioning us.

Kulman, who was at the tiller, gave an order to the sailor at the oars. We swung round a bend of the shore and lost sight of the Austrians. Close ahead was another landing-stage. We moored beside it. Without wasting a second, but also without showing haste, we stepped from the boat and climbed the steps—Kulman and I first, then Josef and White. Two Austrian sentries and some Russian officials stood at the top of the steps. They looked hard at us; but, satisfied by the uniforms of Kulman and Josef, merely nodded a greeting as we passed towards the dock gates and comparative freedom.

CHAPTER XVII.

A RUSSIAN INTERLUDE.

ODESSA, like the rest of the Ukraine, had exchanged Bolshevism for Austro-German domination. Already, when we passed through the docks, it was easy to see who were the masters. Austrian customs officers controlled the quays; Austrian and German soldiers guarded the storehouses; Austrian sentries stood at the dock gates and sometimes demanded to see civilians' passports. Had we not been vouched for by the uniforms of the *Batoum's* third engineer and third mate, the sentries might well have stopped White and me.

Once outside the gates we hired a cab and drove to an address given us by Mr S.—that of the sister and mother of a M. Constantinoff, a Russian professor at Robert College, Constantinople. Arrived there, we left Josef and Kulman, with very sincere expressions of goodwill.

Mlle. Constantinoff received us cordially but calmly, as if it were an everyday event for two down-at-heel British officers to drop from the skies, with a letter of introduction but without the least warning.

"Why, only three days ago," she related, "two officers of the Russian Imperial Army arrived here under like circumstances. They made their way from Petrograd through Soviet territory. They now occupy the room below ours."

Once again Providence seemed to have played into our hands, for when these ex-officers were asked how best we could live in the German-occupied city, they produced the two false passports by means of which they had travelled across Bolshevik Russia. They now lived in the Ukraine under their own names and with their own identity papers. The faked passports, no longer necessary to them, they handed to us.

Without the passports we could scarcely have found lodging or rations, for every non-Ukrainian in Odessa had to register with the Austrian authorities. Tom White, therefore, became Serge Feodorovitch Davidoff, originally from Turkestan, and I claimed to be Evgeni Nestorovitch von Genko, a Lett from Riga. This origin suited me very well, for the Letts, although former subjects of Imperial Russia, can mostly speak the German patois of the Baltic provinces. My passport admitted my claim to be a young bachelor, but White's allotted him a missing wife named Anastasia, aged nineteen.

In Odessa there were still a few British subjects who had remained through the dreadful days of the first Bolshevik occupation, and the rather more peaceful Austro-German régime. It happened that Mlle. Constantinoff knew one of them, a leather manufacturer named Hatton.

In his house we found refuge until other arrangements could be made.

Like most people in Odessa, he showed us every kindness in his power, as did his Russian wife and her relations. It was, however, unwise to remain for long with an Englishman, as he himself would have been imprisoned if the Austrians discovered that he was harbouring two British officers.

The professor's sister played providence yet again, and produced another invaluable friend—one Vladimir Franzovitch B., a lieutenant of the Ukrainian Artillery.

Vladimir Franzovitch, who had lost his all in the revolution, lived in two small rooms. The larger one he shared with us, there being just room enough for three camp-beds, placed side by side and touching each other. The second apartment was occupied by his mistress.

Obviously the situation had its drawbacks. It also had its advantages. The rooms were in one of the city's poorest quarters. The neighbours, therefore, included no enemy soldiers; for the Germans and Austrians had settled in the more comfortable districts.

The *dvornik* was an old sergeant of the Imperial Guard, with a bitter hatred of Bolshevism and all its works. The tale which Vladimir Franzovitch told of us—that we were English civilians escaped from Moscow—was in itself a guarantee that he would befriend us. He took our false passports to the food commissioners, and thus obtained bread and sugar rations for Serge Feodorovitch Davidoff and Evgeni Nestorovitch von Genko.

Our principal interest was now in the news from Bulgaria, for on it hinged our future movements. We visited Hatton each day, to obtain translations from the local press. These I supplemented from the two-day-old newspapers of Lemberg and Vienna, bought at the kiosks.

The Bulgarian Armistice was an accomplished fact, but all the German troops had not yet left Bulgaria. Our problem was whether to make for Bulgaria or Siberia.

Wilkowsky all but tipped the scales in favour of Siberia. He arrived suddenly from Constantinople, having hidden on a steamer that weighed anchor a few days after the *Batoum's* departure. From being a penniless prisoner, without even the means of corresponding with his family, he was now prosperous and comfortable; for his father was a wealthy lawyer living in Odessa, and his uncle the Minister of Justice in Hetman Skoropadsky's Ukrainian Government.

Among his friends was the local commissary of General Denikin, who was then beginning to build up his Volunteer Army, composed of Kuban Cossacks and ex-officers of the Imperial Army, and was preparing to advance against the Soviet forces in the Caucasus. Every few days the commissary sent a party of ex-officers, by way of Novorosisk, to the Volunteer Army headquarters at Ekaterinodar.

General Denikin was making advances to the Allies, so that the commissary was delighted at the chance of enlisting two British aviators. His offer was that we should fly with Denikin's army for a few weeks and help to organise the Flying

Corps, after which we could proceed by aeroplane to some Allied detachment in Siberia,

The adventure seemed attractive, and we hesitated over it. But illness took the decision from our hands. I was laid low by jaundice, and unable to travel with the next party that left for Novorosisk. Weakened as I was by various forms of hardship, several days passed before I recovered, under the kind-hearted ministrations of Elena Stepanovna, Hatton's Russian wife.

The aftermath of jaundice once brought us what we least desired—conspicuousness. In hot weather the Russians living around the Black Sea bathe in the altogether. There, men's bathing costumes attract almost as much attention as would a lack of them at Brighton. Hatton, White, and I formed a bathing party soon after I felt better. Until we were crossing the beach below the public gardens none of us realised that the colour of my skin was still a warm yellow. The spectacle of a yellow man in all his nakedness drew many sightseers, including Austrian soldiers. I dressed under cover of a rock, and lost no time in leaving the gardens.

No sooner was I free from jaundice than fate sent another set-back. White and I succumbed to the plague of influenza which was sweeping across Europe from west to east, and which in one week killed forty thousand inhabitants of Odessa. For three days we lay in Vladimir Franzovitch's little room—weak, feverish, miserable, and at times light-headed—while his mistress fed us with milk, and heaped every kind of clothing over us for warmth.

Recovery was hastened by the best possible tonic—news that the way to Varna, on the Bulgarian coast, was open to us. Thanks were due to several friends for this means to freedom. Hatton had introduced us to a cosmopolitan Britisher named Waite, who adopted us wholeheartedly and swore to get us out of the Ukraine. He enlisted the help of Louis Demy, a Russian sea-captain. Demy spoke of us to Commodore Wolkenau, the Ukrainian officer who, under the Austrians, controlled the shipping at Odessa.

Wolkenau, having been an officer of the Imperial Navy, was a good friend of the British. Moreover, the daily bulletins made it apparent that the Allies were winning the war, so that he was glad of an opportunity to prove his sympathies by helping British officers. He arranged for our passage on a Red Cross ship that was to repatriate Russian prisoners from Austria, now waiting at Varna.

There was an interval of ten days' waiting before the boat sailed. These we passed in moving about the city, in consorting with Ukrainian officers and officials introduced by Wilkowsky, and in collecting information likely to be of use to the British Intelligence Department.

Our usual companion was one Pat O'Flaherty, an Irishman on the staff of the Eastern Telegraph Company, who had stayed in Odessa during the Bolshevik and Austro-German occupations. Entering a café with O'Flaherty was like a blindfold draw in a sweepstake of identities. Always he met friends, but until the moment

of introduction neither we nor he knew how or as what we were to be presented. Once, we were merchants from Nikolaieff; anon, motor-car agents from Moscow; yet again, oil experts returned from Baku.

"Mister Califatti," said O'Flaherty on one occasion, presenting me to a Jewish speculator.

"When he was at Nijni Novgorod fair," Pat continued in all seriousness, "Mister Califatti bought a beautiful fur coat. He now wants to sell it. Perhaps you would like to buy it?"

The Jew offered a thousand roubles for the mythical overcoat, provided it conformed to the Irishman's declaration that it was of first-class astrakhan, and in four skins; while White and I remained speechless with astonishment, embarrassment, and the desire to grin.

In those days the Bolsheviks of Odessa, after months of suppression by the German Military Command, were beginning to raise their heads again. There was much talk of a withdrawal of German and Austrian troops from the Ukraine, to reinforce the French and Italian fronts. The Bolsheviks were ready, if this happened, to rise up and capture the city.

The possession of arms by civilians was strictly forbidden, and any man found in the streets with a revolver was liable to be shot offhand by Austrian soldiers or Ukrainian gendarmes. But the Bolsheviks laughed at the many proclamations calling for the handing over of firearms. They hid rifles, revolvers, and ammunition in cellars and attics, or buried them in the ground.

Many of our neighbours in the working-class quarter were Bolsheviks. Often they scowled at Vladimir Franzovitch as he passed them in his uniform of a lieutenant of the Ukrainian Artillery; and it was evident that when the Austrians withdrew, our room would be rather more dangerous as a home than a powder factory threatened by fire.

The consul of Soviet Russia was preparing lists of men willing to serve in the corps of Red Guards that had been planned, and spent hundreds of thousands of roubles in propaganda. An immediate rising was threatened; whereupon Austrian and Ukrainian military police surrounded the consulate, captured the lists, and arrested and imprisoned the consul, with two hundred Bolsheviks who had given their names as prospective Red Guards. Sixty of them were shot.

Even that lesson failed to frighten the half-starved men who lurked in the poorer quarters. Often, in the evening, they haunted the streets in small gangs that held up passers-by and stripped them of their pocket-books and watches, and sometimes of their clothes.

The ugliest aspect of an ugly situation was that many soldiers of the Austrian forces, particularly the Magyars, sympathised with the Bolsheviks, and were ready to join them if the troops were withdrawn. The sudden realisation that Austria was beaten, coupled with hatred of Austrian Imperialism, went to their heads like new wine. They foresaw an era in which the working man and the private soldier

would grab whatever they wanted. Bands of Hungarian privates proved their belief in this millennium by sacking the warehouses in the docks, under cover of night.

Odessa was overfull of members of the *bourgeoisie*, who had flocked to what they regarded as the last refuge against Bolshevism in European Russia. Refugees had swelled the population from six hundred thousand to a million and a half. The middle classes — professional men, merchants, traders, and speculators—knew they were living on the edge of a volcano, and tried to drown the knowledge in revelry. Each evening, parties costing thousands of roubles were given in the restaurants. Wine and vodka, as aids to forgetfulness of the fear that hovered over every feast, were well worth their hundred roubles a bottle.

Their orgy of speculation in inflated prices and their mock merriment left the *bourgeoisie* neither time nor energy to take action against the horrors that threatened them. In general they adopted a pose of fatalistic apathy, and tried hard to soothe themselves into the belief that the Allies would save them, since they would not save themselves. For the rest, they laughed hysterically, speculated unceasingly, and talked charmingly and interminably.

The only serious preparation against a renewal of the Red Terror in Odessa was made by ex-officers, who banded themselves into a semi-official corps. But they possessed few arms and less ammunition. Even the official forces of the Ukraine could place only a dozen small-

calibre guns round Odessa, and were obliged to be content with one rifle between two or three men. In any case, the loyalty of the private soldier in the small Ukrainian army was a doubtful quantity, and unlikely to be proof against the temptations of rich loot and licensed rapine.

Small arms were worth their weight in silver. Vladimir Franzovitch, discovering that White and I possessed German revolvers, implored us to sell them to him before we left. He offered twenty pounds apiece for them. In Constantinople we had bought them for five pounds each, and in England they would have cost less than forty shillings.

Vladimir Franzovitch was weighed down by the most extreme pessimism over the future of Russia.

"We cannot be a nation again for a hundred years," he said. "The people are either revelling in brute-instinct, drunk with the strong wine of a spurious and half-understood idealism, or are dying in their thousands of starvation. Most of the strong men who might have helped to save the country have been killed. And the *bourgeoisie* folds it arms and awaits destruction in sheep-like inaction."

He saw but one hope—the Cossacks and ex-officers who were rallying to Denikin's army in the Caucasus; and Denikin could make no important move unless the Allies backed him with arms and munitions. Until this happened, his small army would be but an oasis in the desert of hopelessness.

We were present at several gatherings of officers in Vladimir Franzovitch's rooms. Over bread and salted fish, washed down by tea, they discussed the black past and the blacker future. From them we heard awful tales of massacres and looting during the Bolshevist domination over the Black Sea regions.

Of these the most dreadful was that of the cruiser *Almaz*. There have been published many imaginative reports of Bolshevik massacres in 1918; but for horror these are equalled by many true stories that have never been fully told, and never will be until the veil of isolation is lifted and the seeker after truth is free to gather his information at first-hand.

I have every reason to believe the story of the *Almaz*. It was vouched for not only by Vladimir Franzovitch and other Russians whom we met in Odessa, but by Englishmen who were living in the city at the time and are now back in England. Moreover, it is perpetuated in a local song similar to those of the French Revolution.

The Bolsheviks who captured Odessa in the early spring of 1918 made their headquarters on the cruiser *Almaz*. Their first batch of arrests comprised about two hundred officers, with a few officials and other civilians. These were taken to the *Almaz* and lined up on the deck. Each man in turn was asked: "Would you prefer a hot bath or a cold?" Those that chose a cold bath were thrown into the Black Sea, with weights tied to their feet. Those that said "hot" were stoked into the furnaces—alive.

Later, one Murravieff, believed to be a former *agent provocateur* of the Tsarist secret police, came to Odessa as Bolshevik commissary. He divided the city into four sections and the Red Guards into four parties, each of which was allotted its particular district for three days of licensed looting.

The saturnalia was due to begin in three days' time, when the first Austro-Hungarian detachment landed to restore order, in response to the Ukrainian Provisional Government's invitation. Many of the looters were rounded up and shot; although the Bolshevik leaders, including Murravieff and several Jews, escaped with millions of roubles, commandeered from the bank reserves. Murravieff afterwards had the decency to commit suicide; but his Jewish colleagues continued to flourish in Soviet Russia.

Odessa had a respite from Bolshevist domination until the tragedy of March 1919. Then, after a period of occupation by an insufficient Franco-Greek force, the city was evacuated in the face of an army of Soviet troops. Credible eye-witnesses report the massacre of three thousand people within a few days of Odessa's recapture by the Bolsheviks.

For all I know to the contrary, Lenin, despite the proved and damning evidence of past connections with the German Kaiser's penetration agents, and despite the probability that his astonishing rise to power was facilitated by the Tedeschi-Ashkenazi of Frankfurt, may be an intellectual idealist who considers all means justifiable in establishing a form of communism that event-

ually may better the world. But I do know with certainty that Bolshevism, as practised locally in Russia during 1918 by unthinking hordes who were not and did not pretend to be intellectual idealists, often meant universal injustice, flagrant robbery, senseless butchery, and a tyranny equal to that of Ivan the Terrible or of any Oriental despot. All the writings of biassed minority-mongers who have confined their investigations to consorting with Soviet officials at Moscow and Petrograd, all the blinkered sympathy of agitators who devote their lives to fostering a diabolic discontent, all the chirruping of the mentally perverted women and men who, at a safe distance of thousands of miles from actuality, have adopted theoretical Bolshevism as the latest fashion in parlour enthusiasms, cannot condone the fact.

Money and life were the only cheap commodities in Odessa. Paper roubles of every denomination — Imperial notes, Kerensky notes, Ukrainian notes, and Municipal notes — there were in scores and hundreds of thousands; and each issue was trailed by several kinds of forgery, so that only an expert could tell the true from the false.

Everything else was rare and wildly expensive. Meat was ten, weak tea a hundred and ten, roubles a pound. New suits of clothes were unobtainable at any price, for there was no cloth. Second-hand clothes could be bought in the Jewish market, where the dealers demanded from eight hundred roubles for a shoddy suit, and from five hundred for an overcoat. A collar

cost eight roubles, a handkerchief four. Other prices were proportionate.

The colossal price of things was due as much to Jewish speculation as to scarcity. Everything for sale passed through the hands of a succession of middlemen before it reached the public. A consignment from Austria or Germany, or the produce of a local factory, would be bought by one speculator, sold to another, resold to a third, and perhaps to a fourth and a fifth. Each of the middlemen would allot himself a profit of twenty to two hundred per cent. The same process was applied to the boots, foodstuffs, and equipment which Austrian officers and soldiers stole from their military stores and sold to the speculators.

All day long Franconi's and Robinart's, the two principal cafés of Odessa, were infested by swarms of swarthy Jews, who wandered from table to table, selling and reselling and piling up enormous fortunes in paper roubles. And elsewhere in the city hundreds of thousands of Russians were in little more than rags, many thousands of them half-dead from want of nourishment.

As they passed the cafés where the Jews haggled and made it ever more difficult for the half-starved masses to keep alive, the poorer Russians talked of pogroms. The talk culminated later, when the Germans and Austrians had withdrawn from Odessa, in massacres of the less prosperous Jews; while the richer ones, who were the real promoters of discord, were warned in time and stole away with their wealth—as always happens when pogroms are threatened.

The actions of the Ukrainian Jews during the Austro-German occupation provided a very typical instance of the provocative part played by the Jews of Eastern Europe. The Hebrew, more calculating and infinitely more cunning than the Slav peasant or workman, ties, binds, and enmeshes him in a web of usury, speculation, mortgage, and irksome liability; until the Slav, goaded beyond his powers of endurance by the men who prey on his instability and ignorance, rises up and seeks a solution in regrettable violence.

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Glorious news heartened White and myself during the period of waiting for the Red Cross ship to sail. Each morning we walked down the principal street of Odessa until we reached Austrian headquarters, outside of which were posted the daily official and press bulletins, written in German. I mingled with the crowd before the notice-board, while White looked in a shop window until I rejoined him and related the latest Allied victory—the capture of Lille, Roubaix, Turcoing, La Bassee, or Ostend, or the final phases of Allenby's advance in Syria.

With Hatton, Waite, and other Britishers, we rejoiced greatly in private, while the German soldiers became glummer and glummer, and the Austrian officers lost a portion of their corsetted poise as they strutted, peacock-wise, along the boulevards. The Russian *bourgeoisie* remained apathetic as ever. Their main interest in the prospect of a general armistice seemed to be the probable effect on prices, and on the

rouble's value, of the expected arrival of the British.

As for our Bolshevik neighbours, they continued to unearth and clean their rifles and revolvers, while the corps of ex-officers drilled and planned defence works outside Odessa.

On the evening before the Red Cross ship left for Varna we boarded her, after slipping past the Austrian sentry at the dock gates. Louis Demy and Pat O'Flaherty accompanied us as far as the gangway.

We remained hidden throughout the night, and only ventured into the open when, at ten o'clock in the morning, we steamed out of the wide-curved harbour to the open sea.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SOFIA, SALONIKA, AND SO TO BED.

STIMULATED by the knowledge that Varna was occupied by the British, we walked the decks openly, flaunting our protean rôles of British officers, highly contented men, first-class passengers, and third-class scarecrows.

Like the *Batoum*, the Red Cross ship brought others who began the voyage as semi-stowaways. Commodore Wolkenau had told us in Odessa that among our shipmates would be a certain general from Deniken's army. We found him—a tall, bearded, Grand-Duke-Nicolas-like man—dining in the second-class saloon, and wearing a suit of clothes nearly as shabby as our own. To dodge investigation by the Austrian port authorities he had assumed, with the connivance of the ship's captain, the character of an engineer's mate. The "engineer" who owned him as mate was in reality an ex-commander of the Russian navy, also attached to Denikin's forces. The pair of them were travelling to Salonika, as emissaries of General Denikin, to ask the Franco-British command for arms, ammunition, and financial support.

Another fellow-passenger was a former lieutenant of the Russian navy, who, since the German occupation of Sevastopol, had been acting as an agent of the Allies. He carried a list of the German and Austrian ships and submarines in the Black Sea, and details of the coast defences.

The three days' voyage was uneventful. The Black Sea remained at its smoothest. A pleasant sun harmonised with the goodwill and friendliness of all on board, and with our deep content, as we continued to tread on air and impatient expectation.

A Bulgarian destroyer pranced out to meet us, and led the vessel through the devious mine-fields and into the miniature, toy-like harbour of Varna. The Bulgarian authorities imposed a four days' quarantine upon all passengers; but the general, the naval commander, and the Franco-British agent joined with us in avoiding this delay by sending a collective note to the French naval officer who controlled the port. As at Odessa, we rowed ashore with our complete luggage wrapped in two newspapers, each of which contained a tooth-brush, a revolver, some cartridges, a comb, a razor, a spare shirt, a spare collar, and a few handkerchiefs.

Outside the docks a British trooper in dusky khaki, shoulder-badged with the name of a yeomanry regiment, passed us at a gallop. The sight of him sent an acute thrill through me, for he was a symbol of all that I had missed since the day when I woke up to find myself pinned beneath the wreck of an areoplane on a hillside near Nablus.

White looked after him hungrily. He had been among the Turks for three years, and since capture this was his first sight of a British Tommy on duty.

"How about it?" I asked.

"I don't know. Somehow he makes me feel nohow in general and anyhow in particular."

We reported to the British general commanding the force of occupation, and gladly delivered to his intelligence officer our information about Odessa and the Ukraine. At the hotel occupied by the staff there were preliminary doubts whether such hobo-like ragamuffins could be British officers; but our knowledge of army shop-talk, of the cuss-words fashionable a year earlier, and of the chorus of "Good-by-ee," soon convinced the neat-uniformed members of the mess that we really were lost lambs waiting to be reintroduced to rations, drinks, and the field cashier.

For many days our extravagant shabbiness stood in the way of a complete realisation that we were no longer under-dogs of the fortune of war, but had come back into our own. Bulgarian officers, their truculence in no way impaired by their country's downfall, wanted us to leave our first-class carriage on the way to Sofia. Outside Sofia station it was impossible to hire a cab, for no cabman could credit us with the price of a fare. The staff of the British Mission, to whom we gave reams of reports, tried their politest not to laugh outright at our clothes, but broke down before the green-and-yellow check waistcoat, many sizes too large, which White had received from a British civilian in Odessa.

Even the real Ford car lent us by the British Mission for the journey to Salonika failed to establish a sense of dignity. Once, when we stopped on the road near a British column, the driver was asked who were his pals the tramps.

We drove joyously down the Struma valley and through the Kreshna and Ruppel passes, still littered with the débris of the Bulgarian retreat. Rustied remnants of guns lolled on the slopes descending to the river. Broken carts, twisted motor-lorries, horse and oxen skeletons—all the flotsam of a broken army mottled the roadside fields. In the rocky sides of the mountain passes were great clefts, from which dislodged boulders had hurtled down on the Bulgar columns when British aeroplanes bombed them as they scurried northward. We passed through the scraggy uplands of Lower Macedonia, and so to Salonika.

The real Ford car halted in the imposing grounds that surrounded the imposing building occupied by British General Headquarters at Salonika. As we climbed the steps leading to the front door, warmly expectant of a welcome by reason of our information from South Russia, an orderly pointed out that this entrance was reserved for Big Noises and By-No-Means-Little Noises. We swerved aside, and entered an unpretentious side door, labelled "Officers Only."

"Wojer want?" asked a London Tommy, who sat at a desk inside it.

"We want to report to Major Greentabs of the Intelligence Department."

The Tommy looked not too contemptuously at

our sunken cheeks, our shapeless hats, our torn, creased, mud-spotted, tatterdemalion clothes, and almost admiringly at White's check waistcoat.

"Nah look 'ere, civvies," he instructed, "yer speak English well inuf. Carncher read it? The notice says 'Officers Only,' an' it means only officers. Dagoes 'ave ter use the yentrance rahnd the corner, so aht *yew* go, double quick."

That day Salonika gave itself up to revelry, by reason of an unfounded report that an armistice had been signed on the Western Front. One of the celebrators was a certain second-class air mechanic of the Royal Air Force. We stopped him in the street and asked the way to R.A.F. headquarters. Beatifically he breathed whiskied breath at me as he stared in unsteady surprise.

"George," he called to his companion, "the war's over, and here's two English blokes in civvies. Want to join the Royal Air Force, they do." Then, tapping me on the chest, "Doanchew join the Royal Air Force. We're a rotten lot of drunks."

Armed with signed certificates of identity, we went to the officers' rest-house to demand beds.

"Speak English?" said a quartermaster-sergeant as we entered.

"Yes."

"Been expecting you. The Greek contractor's sons, aren't you?"

Later, not long before the bulletin-board showed the rumoured armistice with Germany to be premature, an orderly in the rest-house

wished to share the great news that wasn't true with the nearest person, who happened to be White. He stopped short on seeing a dubious civilian. But his good fellowship was not to be denied. Pidgin French being the means of fraternisation between the multi-nationalitied troops in Salonika and the Greek civilians, he slapped White on the back and announced—"Matey, *la guerre est finie!*"

Metamorphosed by ordnance uniforms from third-class scarecrows to the regulation pattern of officer, we spent glorious days of rest and recuperation.

The thousand miles Odyssey ended when, by way of Port Said, we passed from Salonika the squalid to Cairo the comfortable; and so to the world where they dined, danced, demobilised, signed peace treaties, and went on strike.

CHAPTER XIX.

A DAMASCUS POSTSCRIPT, AND SOME WORDS ON THE KNIGHTS OF ARABY; A CRUSADER IN SHORTS; A VERY NOBLE LADYE; AND SOME HAPPY ENDINGS.

Of all the cities in the Near and Middle East, Damascus is at once the most ancient, the most unchanged by time, the most unreservedly Oriental, and the most elusive.

Constantinople is Byzantium cum Mohammedan lust for power, cum Levantine materialism, cum European exploitation and Bourse transactions, in a setting of natural and architectural magnificence; a city that expresses itself variously and inharmoniously by a blendless chorus from an unmixable mixture of creeds and races; a charming, feminine city with a wayward soul; a cruel unstable city of gamblers; a city of pleasant alley-ways, delightful waterways, fear-haunted prisons and extravagant rogueries; to my mind, the most intriguing city in the world.

Cairo is a compound of grandiose antiquity, modern opulence, degenerate Arab touts, Arab Babudom, reserved officialdom, the cosmopolitan

clamour of five great hotels, sordid and curious vice, sand-fringed suburbs, traffic in tourists and fake scarabs, and the compelling, changeless charm of the Nile.

Alexandria is bastard Byzantine-Levantine, with a wonderful past, an insistent Cotton Exchange, a lovely harbour, a crooked racecourse where crooked races are run, and a summer colony for Cairo's white-ducked Westerns.

Port Said is a dull, heat-heavy hell, at which the traffic to the Far East calls of unwelcome necessity, pays its tolls, skirts the green-grey statue of de Lesseps, and gladly glides down the turquoise-toned Suez Canal.

Suez is a hard-faced ex-courtesan, formerly famed for outrageous spectacles, but now converted by expedience into an unreal, uninviting, hypocritical respectability; a harbour-landlady for squat-sailed, dancing *dhows*.

Mecca is the pilgrim city *in excelsis*, with a Holy Stone, overpowering heat, much colour and squalor, a reputation for impenetrability, and no traditions earlier than the birth of the Prophet.

Jerusalem has a stupendous history, and is yet the most disappointing city in the world: a small gilded-gingerbread city with no beautiful building except the blue-tiled Mosque of Omar, no first-class view except that of the walls and roof-tops from the Mount of Olives; a city trading its past for Western charity; a city with a rebuilt Tower of David masquerading as the original, a probably authentic relic in the Tomb of Absalom, and many dubious ones

where, within the space of fifty square yards of beflagged church-floor, mumbling guides point out to pilgrims in pince-nez the supposed tombs of Jesus of Nazareth, Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus, hard by the supposed site of Calvary, strewn with supposed fragments of the Cross; a city sacred to three great religions, exemplified locally by scheming town-Arabs, ring-curled lethargic Jews aloof from their Western kindred, and swarthy lethargic Christians, educated and largely supported by Euro-American subsidies; a city of narrow, denominational schools that ignore the Fellowship of Man; a city whose Church of the Holy Sepulchre should be an epitome of peace and goodwill, but yet is a place where, in the name of Christian charity, Catholic, Orthodox, Coptic, Armenian, and various kinds of Protestant priests intrigue and squabble over claims to guard relics, windows, and corners, and defray the cost of holy candle-light by collecting from visitors enough money to burn a hundred and one candles for one and a hundred years; a city better read about than examined.

Bagdad is a city with a romantic name, some fine Arabian architecture, and an impressive Western gate, whence the Damascus-bound caravans move dustily across the desert; a city fallen from greatness to the date and grain trade, minor bazaars, and the steamer-and-dhow traffic of the broad-bosomed Tigris; a city redolent of all that Haroun-al-Raschid was, and modern Mesopotamia's opportunist sheikhs emphatically are not; a city with a

prosperous future, thanks to the British irrigation of the Tigris-Euphrates basin into the way it should go.

Mosul is an unlovely, mud-encrusted city that straggles around the ruins of Nineveh the Magnificent.

But Damascus is indescribably a city with an unfathomable soul. In its complex ancestry are the strains of several ancient civilisations. The crooked alleys and decrepit buildings of its oldest quarter, perched on a mountain-projection, have an origin lost in the conjectural mists of an epoch when the written word was not. Other parts of it saw Chaldean, Canaanite, Hittite, Assyrian, and Aramæan domination during the long period when Damascus was the greatest of all marts for trans-desert trade. The plain façade of many a house (purposely plain to divert the cupidity of Turkish pashas) hides a wide white court-yard soothed by fountains, the plashing of which is coolingly heard in divanned rooms, precious with rugs and hangings, and ornamented by minutely detailed designs in fancy arches and miniature cupolas — houses exactly as they were when tenanted by rich merchants who flourished under the greater Arabian caliphs. The street called Straight, the glass-roofed unique bazaar, and a dozen other city-marks, are bafflingly suggestive of contact with a dozen periods of greatness. And in 1918, when the demoralised Turks marched out of the city under the Arab flag that flew defiantly from the city gate, Arab thinkers began to

dream of yet another period of greatness, in which Damascus was to be the centre of another Arabian Empire.

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My motive in returning to Damascus was threefold — certain minor work at Air Force headquarters, an unpraiseworthy resolve to buy carpets and knick-knacks before other officers of the Palestine Army chose their pickings from the merchants' war hoards, and a sneakingly benevolent desire to see George, the mongrel interpreter who had been bullied into betraying my escape plans in Baranki Barracks, but who was yet such a pathetic little nondescript.

With a passenger I left Ramleh Aerodrome in a Bristol Fighter; for with an aeroplane available who would think of travelling by train or car over the disordered rails and roads of Syria? It was a sun-shimmery day, pleasantly cool in the early part of a Palestine November. Everything suggested peace as we flew north-eastward — the calm cloudlessness, the silent sparkling countryside, the rhythmic purring of the engine. The ground mosaic was radiant with that acute clearness which makes flying so much more interesting in the Orient than elsewhere.

Far away to the right we could see, from our height of 6000 feet, the ghost-like outline of the Dead Sea, behind the bleak-ridged hills of Judea. To the left were the shining sea, white-roofed Jaffa, and the lines of sand-dunes that curved in and out of the coloured countryside.

Ahead and around were brown surfaces of grainland and green blotches of woodland, interspaced with grey-gleaming villages.

Soon the Bristol Fighter droned over what had been the old front of Allenby's left flank, with uneven trenches snaking south-eastward from the sand-bordered coast to the Jordan basin. The Jordan itself twisted and writhed through its green-and-gold valley, over which occasional trench-works zigzagged. Then came the hill desolation of Lower Samaria. Near Nablus I reached out a fur-gloved hand and showed my passenger the approximate spot where, seven months earlier, I was shot down and awoke to find Arab nomads approaching my wrecked machine. Slightly to the west was Nazareth, perched pleasingly on high ground.

Close at hand was the wild hill-region that saw what was undoubtedly the greatest one-day achievement in the history of air-bombing—an achievement that yet passed almost unnoticed amid the stupendous happenings of September and October 1918. The 7th Turkish Army was found to be retreating along the rugged road between Kh. Ferweh and Balata. Brigadier-General Borton, C.B., D.S.O., commanding the R.A.F. in Palestine, at once organised a continuous attack by aircraft, comprising all that could be spared from essential duties. His brilliant plan was carried out brilliantly, with astonishing results. Machine after machine, at intervals of a few minutes, dived down to within a few hundred feet of

the Turkish columns, dropped a couple of bombs, fired several hundred rounds of machine-gun ammunition, and flew back for more bombs and bullets to be loosed on the unhappy Turks that littered the Kh. Ferweh-Balata road. The topographical conditions, as aids to the bombers, were ideal: for either side of the road was bordered by gorges, ravines, and steep slopes. In most places, therefore, the Turks could not disperse sideways. Soon few of the columns could advance, for the heads of them were blocked by debris. They could not retire for the same reason. The Turkish rabble bulged, expanded, and bulged again, like a concertina. A number of German drivers cut loose some mules and, riding two on the back of each animal, climbed painfully up the difficult hill-sides. Few others of the now frantic troops escaped. Such as were not killed or injured ran around, uselessly imploring surrender. When the failing light called off the British aircraft, some of which had reloaded and returned to the attack four or five times, the 7th Turkish Army, already routed by Allenby's infantry and cavalry, could scarcely be said to exist. Sections of the Kh. Ferweh-Balata road were heaped horribly with lolling lorries, shattered trucks, abandoned guns, motor-cars and carts, and dead Germans, horses, mules, and Turks. A British Intelligence officer who examined the road soon afterward said he could imagine nothing in military history, except Thermopylæ and an incident in Napoleon's retreat from Moscow, that could match the scene for sheer destruction in so confined a space.

The pear-shaped Sea of Galilee flickered in the sunlight with iridescent twinkling. Just north of where the early river flows into the lake, I picked out the point at which a regiment of Australian Light Horse, confronted on the far bank by a Turco-German force sent from Damascus to defend the ford, swam their horses across the Jordan and routed the enemy.

The patchwork flatness below changed to more plains of grey-brown grain country and grey-green orchard-land, neighboured on the east by the desert across which the armies of age-old civilications — Chaldean, Egyptian, Babylonian, Semitic, Assyrian, Medean, Persian, Macedonian, and Arabian—swept in waves of conquest and counter-conquest, to and from Ur, Babylon, Nineveh, Ctesiphon, Hind, and Old Bagdad, until the Turkish hordes swarmed across from Central Asia and ruined all the lands they conquered.

Small and indistinct at first, then expanding into a vivid clearness as we flew towards it, Damascus came into sight; and of all the views from the air that I remember from flights in Palestine, Egypt, Syria, France, Italy, Bulgaria, Greece, England, and America, this was the loveliest.

Far away to the west was Mount Lebanon, and from it stretched the anti-Lebanon line, growing ever bleaker as it neared the Syrian Desert. The low ground dominated by the heights was a maze of forests, wheat-fields, pasturage, and orchard-land, intermingled with patches of sand. Straight ahead was the ancient city of Damascus,

a straggling surface of white roofs pierced by the domes and minarets of many mosques, all in a grey-whiteness, as if powdered with the dust of its four thousand years of history. Pharpar and Abana, the twin rivers, showed up plainly as, converging and diverging, they descended from their sources on the wooded rim of mountain and were lost to sight behind the jig-saw of crooked streets, square-topped houses, and coloured cultivation. The background was the wide shimmering desert that faded into the eastern horizon.

Having, to the roaring accompaniment of a 1918 Hispano-Suiza aero-engine, circled over this city half as old as time, I spiralled down and landed on the aerodrome.

On horses borrowed from the Sikhs who guarded the aerodrome, we cantered towards the city, three miles distant. The road was utterly vile; for, apart from Turkish neglect, it had for three years been dented and spoiled by German motor-lorries. Every few yards we had to edge our horses round some large hole.

Inside Damascus long-disused tram-lines rose high above the roadway. Through the narrow winding streets there streamed a medley of camels, horses, fat men riding on thin donkeys, goats, rainbow-robed Bedouins, veiled women in black, and fezed Syrians and Armenians. All of them—camels, donkeys, horses, and humans—wound in and around each other, without any pretence at order.

Under such conditions the least mishap is enough to bring about a block in the haphazard

traffic. We were held up for nearly twenty minutes when a donkey, with a huge load of wood straddled on its back, lay down near a hole in the road and refused to budge. Men, women, and animals mingled confusedly, and exhortations and imprecations were flung at the donkey and its master. The onlookers were raining advice as we halted our horses on the rim of the crowd, but none made an attempt to help. And the following is an approximate but far from literal translation of a few remarks—

"O thou unfortunate one! He has a donkey with a stubborn spirit. It has deposited itself on the ground and most annoyingly refuses to rise."

"Beat it hard, I say. I have a string of camels which become unruly because they cannot proceed. Beat it, I say!"

"Nay, rather speak kindly and apply gentle pressure to the under-parts. Then will it lift its forefeet and stand erect. Stubborn donkeys care nothing for blows."

"Pig-faced son of an exceedingly fat she-dog! Displace thy heavy hoof from my astonishingly painful toes!"

"*Ah-ee! Ah-ee!* But a moment hence I had a money-purse, and it has left me."

"O thou unfortunate one! He had a money-purse, and it has left him. O thou unfortunate one!"

And although all knew that the purse was probably hidden in the folds of some Arab's robe, those near the unfortunate one searched and scratched the ground, probably none more assiduously than the man who could have produced it.

Now if the period had been two months earlier, a Turkish gendarme might have taken the donkey-owner apart, and, if he failed to offer a bribe, shot his prostrate beast and hauled its carcase to the roadside. As likely as not it would have been a gendarme who stole the unfortunate one's money.

What actually happened was this. A sun-browned man in light khaki tunic, short trousers, and bare knees sauntered along, a cigarette drooping from the left-hand corner of his mouth.

"*Saa-eeda, Tam-mas Effendim*," said one of the loiterers, making way for him.

"Damned old fool of a moke," said the man in shorts; then bent down and alternately stroked, pushed, and spoke to the donkey. Somehow he persuaded it to rise and start walking. The crowd disentangled itself and its animals from each other, and dispersed. And the man in shorts, his cigarette still dangling from the left-hand corner of his mouth, passed on, as casual as if he had been in Brixton or Birmingham.

Both in appearance and in spirit Damascus had changed much since the days of my captivity. Destitution was yet evident, but far less flagrantly than when I had seen starving babies lying against the walls and crying their hunger. There were no more furtive looks, and many more smiles. The swaggering Germans were supplanted by companionable Tommies, the tyrannous Turkish police by head-dressed Arab gendarmerie. In the long arcaded bazaar the traders had brought out their stocks of carpets,

prayer-rugs, silks, and precious stones, hoarded during the war, and were selling them at prices far below those ruling in war-time Cairo or war-time anywhere else. And everywhere the Arab flag was prominent.

For many a day the talk in the bazaars had been of a new Arabian Empire, as a reward for the exploits of the Emir Feisul's Arabs,—exploits that had not only freed Arabia and helped to free Syria, but had involved the abolition of all blood-feuds in a thousand miles of semi-lawless country. The Emir Feisul himself was on his way to the Peace Conference in Paris, accompanied by Colonel Lawrence, the young Englishman who was the soul of the Arab national revival, and of the epic Arab campaigns between Mecca and Damascus. And many citizens of Damascus were hoping that he would return with the realisation of their dreams that the city was to be the centre of pan-Arabian greatness.

. . . . . .

My inquiries at Baranki Barracks, and in the offices of the British Provost-Marshal and the Arab gendarmerie, failed to trace the fate of George; and I had to be content with the memory of a futile little figure standing on the steps of our railway carriage, on the morning after the betrayal, and saying, with despair in his voice: "I have so little courage. I ask pardon."

Of the other intimate characters in the story I can account for all but two. Jean Willi, the Israelite dragoman who was my benefactor at Nazareth, has not yet given me the chance to pay

back in part the good deeds that I owe him; but I still have hopes. And I can only guess at what happened to Michael Ivanovitch Titoff when the Bolsheviks reoccupied Odessa in the spring of 1919. From what I know of his character, I am certain that when the Soviet troops arrived he proclaimed himself a Bolshevik, and took full advantage of the conditions whereby the unrighteous have special opportunity to flourish.

Vladimir Franzovitch—a Russian as estimable as Michael Ivanovitch was despicable—died for the country he loved and despaired of, fighting in Denikin's army.

For the rest, I can offer happy endings as conventionally apposite as those of the worst best-seller of any lady novelist. Miss Whitaker, who played in Constantinople the noble part of an Edith Cavell, now has a different name. She is married to Sir Robert Paul, one of the British officers whom she had helped to escape. In this crowded narrative I have failed to do justice to the brave and gifted woman who many times risked liberty and life in aiding unfortunate countrymen; but, as the last thing she would desire is advertisement, I refrain from writing the eulogy she deserves.

Another happy ending, almost too good to be true, was the wedding of Colonel Newcombe and Mlle. S., the girl who arranged his escape from Broussa and concealed him in Constantinople while he worked for a withdrawal of Turkey from the war.

Mr S., the British merchant who jeopardised his neck in helping no less than seven British

officers to liberty, has returned to England, and should be conscious of much merit. The Turkish armistice happened a few days before Theodore was to have been hanged. Fulton and Stone were released from the Ministry of War Prison, and twenty-four hours later, by means of threats, they obtained reprieve and freedom for the Greek waiter who had hidden them. He was then half-dead, as a result of insufficient food, and of the dreadful, disease-ridden, insanitary, crowded state of his dungeon; but he recovered under careful nursing, and returned to his mother and sisters, in the house where the gendarmes had captured Yeats-Brown, Fulton, and Stone.

The Maritza restaurant, near Stamboul station, still flourishes; but Theodore is no longer there. With the money gained by acting as conspirator-in-chief for British prisoners, he talks of coming to London and opening a small restaurant of his own. If this happens, he can count on regular customers from among those who saw him, with his bent shoulders and blue-glassed spectacles, flicking a secret letter on to the table-cloth under cover of a menu-card.

Those of us who schemed, escaped, hoped, feared, wore disguises and whiskers, assumed illnesses and insanities, suffered, and amused ourselves generally, are dispersed over five continents. Fulton and Stone went back to Constantinople, but as responsible officials instead of under-dogs of war. White, now a quiet-living manufacturer, has returned to Melbourne. I take the opportunity of mentioning that but for his courage, determination, and common-

sense, the escape would not have succeeded. Hill and Jones, the madmen of Yozgad, Haidar Pasha, and Gumuch Souyou, have gone their demobilised ways in sanity and content—one to Sydney, the other to Glasgow. Paul is somewhere in the Near East, as is Colonel Newcombe. Yeats-Brown—ex-Mlle. Josephine Albert—is in London, with an eyeglass which he kept intact through three years of adventurous captivity, from the day when he was taken prisoner near Bagdad to the day when, from the verandah of his hiding-place opposite the deserted British Embassy in Constantinople, he looked along the Grand Rue de Péra and learned, from the fluttering Allied flags, that the Turkish armistice had been signed. Last and least, I am now in civilian blessedness and America.

Often I have left the satisfying solidity of London, the restful beauty of a Thames backwater, the warm hospitality of New York, the wealth-conscious heartiness of Chicago, to hear the chanted summons to prayer from the minaret that faced my prison in Damascus, watch the intrigues that coloured Constantinople during the twilight of the Turkish Empire, discuss Bolshevism and the price of revolvers with Vladimir Franzovitch as he sits on a camp-bed in his tiny room at Odessa. And time, the greatest of romantics, has nearly persuaded me to believe that I enjoyed it all.

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